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ABSTRACT

Two trends are currently emerging in California community colleges: (1) the rapid growth of the 'new majority' population of non-traditional, at-risk college students; and (2) the increase in distance education opportunities. These trends are forcing student services departments to discover different ways to meet the needs of students in the new technological environment. This study explored the use of Web-based counseling support services as a possible solution to this problem. The purpose of this study was to design, develop and pilot test a Web-based counseling support site at Riverside Community College (California), which included access to online counseling appointments. Through a collaborative process, counseling staff and online students contributed to the results. Analysis led to the following conclusions: (1) the counseling staff needs further staff development prior to full implementation of online counseling services; (2) the Internet provides a viable avenue for the delivery of student services; (3) the collaborative process demonstrated that involvement of all stakeholders in the development process is successful; (4) successful implementation of online student services necessitates established technical support; and (5) the constantly changing nature of the Internet requires ongoing evaluation of Web-based support services. (Contains 22 figures and 12 appendices.) (KP)

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ED 457 949

DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT, AND PILOT TESTING OF A WEB-BASED COUNSELING SUPPORT SITE FOR A CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A Dissertation Presented To The Faculty Of The
Graduate School Of Education And Psychology
Pepperdine University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Education
Educational Technology

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DEDICATION

It is with great joy, and not a small amount of relief, that I dedicate this dissertation to the following three people who had the most influence on its completion.

To my husband, Tony DiThomas, whose life was the most effected by the countless hours, sleepless nights, and weekends and holidays that I spent in my office working on my courses and finally this manuscript. His dedication to his own career and the phenomenal young men he coaches, freed me to pursue mine. I love, admire and respect him with all my heart and will appreciate his support of this endeavor for the rest of my life.

To my parents, Bartholomew Aloysius Brown and Sue Coury Brown, whose unconditional love has set the stage for all of their 15 children—and their offspring—to be contributors to society. They have lived their entire lives in an unshakable relationship with Our Lord and Savior—enjoying learning, embracing challenges, rising to competition, caring for others, sharing their blessings, laughing and loving—and we all learned through their example. Over the past five years they have taught us even more about courage, dedication, absolute love and steadfast faith as they have both dealt so gracefully—never losing their positive outlook and love of life—with Dad's health problems. I will spend the rest of my life continuing to attempt to live up to the example they have set for me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My dissertation committee consisted of four of Pepperdine's erudite faculty members: Dr. Ruth Johnson, who brought a rich knowledge of the California Community Colleges and a great eye for detail; Dr. Nancy Fagan whose thoughtful comments at my preliminary orals helped shape my study; Dr. Jack McManus whose sense of humor and subject matter expertise led to significant changes in my final manuscript; and my chairperson, Dr. Kay Davis, whose clarity of thought and exceptional oral and written communication skills made it possible for me to complete this dissertation. Kay Davis is one of those rare individuals who manages to combine gifted intelligence with a deep caring for the dignity of others. I respect and admire her as an educator and as a person and am truly grateful that she agreed to chair my dissertation committee.

Although I can't name each one, every instructor with whom I came in contact during my tenure at Pepperdine University has touched my life. Their influence can be seen throughout this study—some, overtly as demonstrated by my inclusion of flow-charting in the developmental phase of this study, a technique that I learned from Dr. Linda Wall—while others are more covert, a demonstrated by my striving for peaceful solutions to conflicts, a direct result of Dr. Michele Stimac's influence on my life.

I also appreciate the camaraderie and support of my colleagues in Cadre 2. I leaned a tremendous amount from each of them and will remember them all with a smile. I especially want to thank Kris Drake, whose friendship and commiseration helped me through many difficult times, and her father, Paul Barris, who opened his home to us during our long weeks of classes. I also appreciate the love and support of my friends outside of this program whose understanding during the many times that I could not be with them made it easier for me to accomplish this educational goal.

Although many administrators have been influential in my life, Dr. Daria Burnett, Karen Craig, Pat Johnston, Dr. Linda Lacy, Dr. Jeanie Nishime, Rich Ramirez and Dr. Bob Shorb were especially supportive to me throughout my tenure in this doctorate program.

I must also acknowledge my colleagues and friends at Riverside Community College who made this study possible. There were two in particular who were essential to the success of this endeavor—my brother Billy, whose participation and comments helped garner the support of other members of the counseling department, and my sister Ellen, whose enthusiasm and expertise were an inspiration to all of us.

Finally, I know that I could not have made it through this program without the support of my family. My siblings picked up the slack for me at family events while one sister, Vickie, even helped with the design of some of my graphs for this dissertation. All of them, their significant others, and their children offered much needed and much appreciated moral support. In addition, my nieces and nephews' 4.0 GPA's inspired me to finish this before they surpassed me! Aunt Mayr and Uncle Ron must be mentioned because they have always been there to share in my accomplishments and my defeats, and I know that Uncle Roger is enjoying this with me from heaven.

VITA

Deborah Sue Brown-DiThomas
2110 Sunset Court
Colton, California 92324-2541

Experience

RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE (1990 – Present)

- Interim Director of Matriculation (1999 - Present)
- Counselor/Instructor (1991 – 1999)
- Adjunct Counselor/Instructor (1990 – 1991)

YUCAIPA/CALIMESA JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (1974 – 1991)

- Teacher

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO (1990 – Present)

- Adjunct Instructor

UNIVERSIDE OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE (1989 – 1996)

- Adjunct Instructor

Professional Credentials

Community College counseling Credential
Pupil Personnel Services Credential
General Elementary Credential
Standard Secondary Credential
Microcomputer Certificate for Educators
Educational Computer Resource Specialist Certificate

Education

Ed.D – Pepperdine University
M.A. in Education – Azusa Pacific University
B.S. in Physical Education – California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

ABSTRACT

Two trends are currently converging on the California Community Colleges, (a) the rapid growth of the 'new majority' of non-traditional, at risk college student population, and (b) the increase in distance education opportunities. These trends are forcing student services departments to discover different ways to meet the needs of this population of students in the new technological environment. This study explored the use of web-based counseling support services as a possible solution to this problem.

The purpose of this study was to design, develop and pilot test a web-based counseling support site, which included access to online counseling appointments. To these ends, an exploratory study was conducted which included a three-phased evaluation process. Through a collaborative process, the goal of which was involvement of all stakeholders, members of Riverside Community College's counseling staff and online students contributed to the results.

Analysis of the responses from both counselors and students and other data collected through the design and development phases led to the following conclusions:

1. Riverside Community College's counseling faculty needs further staff development prior to full implementation of online counseling services for the general student population.
2. The Internet provides a viable avenue for the delivery of student services and this vehicle should continue to be explored in the future.
3. The collaborative process used in this study demonstrated that involvement of all stakeholders in the development of web-based support services was a success.
4. In order for the implementation of online student services to be successful in community colleges, technical support must be in place for faculty, students and staff.
5. The constantly changing nature of the Internet requires that evaluation of web-based support services be an ongoing process.

Because of the limited number of students involved, results from this study can not be inferred to the larger student population. However, it is clear that Riverside Community College should continue to expand its online student services. Implications for other colleges seeking to explore this option for the delivery of student services suggest inclusion of stakeholders in all phases of the design, development and implementation of online services.

COURSES TAKEN

Course Number	Course Title	Instructor
ED 700	Leadership	Stimac
ED 714	Management of Human Resources	Stimac
ED 721	Policy Development	Robinson
ED 724	Ethics and Society	Richardson
ED 729	Communication and Information Technology	Davis / Cary
ED 730	Research Methodology	Davis
ED 731	Descriptive Statistics	McManus
ED 732	Inferential Statistics	Madjidi
ED 762	World Perspectives	Cannings
ED 770	Learning and Design	Polin
ED 771 A/B	Human Computer Interaction	Cannings / Wall
ED 773	Managing the Technological Environment	McManus
ED 785	Selected Topics - Consultancy	McManus / Wall
ED 785	Selected Topics - Capitol Experience	McManus / Cannings
ED 787	Comprehensive Examination Seminar	McManus / Polin
ED 791	Dissertation Research	Davis

Chapter I

Introduction

There is a revolution occurring in higher education that will probably continue to grow and expand into all other levels of education as we move into the 21st Century. This revolution is referred to in many different ways—a few examples of which are: distance learning, distance education, computer-mediated instruction, computer-aided instruction, online learning, and web-based instruction. Although each of these terms refers to specific teaching and learning opportunities, there are two major similarities among all of them. First, they all involve the use of some type of technology in the teaching/learning process, and second, they are all attempts to move beyond traditional classroom teaching with the intent of offering students an alternative that either better fits their lifestyles, their learning styles, or both.

Statement of Problem

Although many studies have demonstrated 'no significant difference' in student achievement and satisfaction between distance education and traditional classroom instruction (Bole, 1998; Kubala, 1998; McCollum, 1997; Russell, 1995; & Walling, 1996;), this rapid growth of distance education in higher education raises concerns among those in the student services segment of this community. How will students in this new environment access college support services, such as counseling, tutorial services, and financial services?

This level of concern is especially high in the California Community Colleges where numbers of part-time, first-generation and academically under-prepared college students are increasing and the student population is rapidly becoming more diverse

(Martens, Lara, Cordova, & Harris, 1995; Nussbaum, 1998; Patrick, Furlow, & Donovan, 1988). Studies have demonstrated that these populations of students have lower persistence rates, lower grade point averages (Grimes & Antworth, 1996; Ramirez & Evans, 1988) and are less likely to seek help from counselors and faculty than the traditional college student of the past (Fallon, 1997; Kriner & Shriberg, 1992). Yet other studies (Crawford, McFarland, & Rhatigan, 1978; Garnett 1990; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Glennen, 1975; Hamilton, 1994; Lucas, 1990; Newton, 1990; Patrick & Donovan, 1988; Ramirez & Evans, 1988; Rickinson, 1998; & Tinto, 1997) have demonstrated that intrusive counseling and student support services are successful in raising GPA and retention rates for these at-risk student populations.

If this 'new majority' of non-traditional, at-risk community college student chooses to participate in "anytime, anyplace" educational opportunities afforded through distance education courses *will they be able to succeed*? One fact is clear—they will not have access to those traditional on-site counseling and other support services, which have proven successful for this student population in the past. Based on the findings in traditional education, it is reasonable to believe that retention and success will increase for this same population of students in the distance education environment *if they have access to student support services within that environment*. Therefore, it seems clear that institutions of higher education should be concerned not only with the development of distance learning opportunities for its students, but also with providing students access to support services within the distance learning environment.

Historical Perspective

The search for alternatives to traditional classroom teaching is not a new concept—correspondence courses, which are the forerunner of technology driven distance education opportunities, have been in existence since 1928 (Russell, 1997). Yet the fervor with which many institutions of higher education are currently embracing distance education is unprecedented. One example of this is Dallas County Community College District, which in 1972 produced its first telecourse and enrolled 399 students. In 1993 the enrollment in telecourses in this district had grown to 7,815 students (Ball, 1994, p. 64). Another example of a successful distance learning University is the University of Phoenix which was incorporated in 1976 by Dr. John Sperling. Since its inception, "it has grown to 90 campuses and learning centers nationwide with nearly 57,400 adult students working toward MBAs or undergraduate degrees. It has another 3,300 students in its accredited San Francisco based online program" (Bole, 1998, p. 16). How has the University of Phoenix become so successful? The key to their success according to Bole is simple--they served their customers. They found that over 40% of their students were over the age of 24 and were working. These "customers" needed a flexible educational option--so the University of Phoenix gave them that--through distance education opportunities. One might pose the question, “How about student success?” Bole answers this question with the statement, "With 50 percent annual growth rates in the program, a course completion rate of 98 percent and a graduation rate of nearly 60 percent online -- vs. less than 40 percent in most universities -- the students clearly like it" (Bole, 1998, p. 17).

In addition to traditional institutions of higher education that offer some of their courses via distance education, today there are very successful universities that offer entire programs and degrees through these methods (Herbert, 1997; Mora-Lopez & Song, 1998; Walling, 1996). One example is the University of South Carolina, where students may complete their degree from the College of Library and Information Science totally through distance education. The courses in this program are taught using many different technologies including interactive, closed-circuit television, mailed videotaped segments, and live-interactive sessions via satellite. Linda Walling, a professor in this program, states, "We believe that distance education provides library education that is clearly the equal of that delivered by any other means in any other place and in some ways gives the student an even richer educational experience" (Walling, 1996, p. 1). The Open University in Great Britain, is an example of a university that restricts its course offerings to distance education only (Bole, 1998; Perrin, 1997). According to Perrin, "The Open University of Great Britain has demonstrated how higher education can be made open as to people, open as to places, open as to ideas, and open as to methods. Today it enrolls 150,000 students in degree programs and its reputation ranks among the leaders in higher education worldwide" (1997, p. 14).

Proponents of distance education generally agree that it: a) meets the needs of students who can't attend traditional college classes, b) is cost effective, and c) allows for quick and effective access to information. They also predict the exponential growth of distance education over the next few years due primarily to these reasons (Ball, 1994; Bole, 1998; Dede, 1991; Douvanis, 1997; Picard, 1996). Perhaps Ball (1994) best summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of distance education with the following statement:

> Distance learning is an instructional option that throws open the doors to education across the nation and to other countries as well. Learners from diverse backgrounds and geographic locations can be exposed to the best in education--in instructional materials, teachers and creative methodology....Distance learning can bring knowledge to those who need it in a convenient and cost-effective manner. The flexibility and responsiveness of this learning medium allows learners in any environment to access information that can be directly applied to social, educational or work dynamics. Distance learning is an excellent tool for sharing knowledge. And with knowledge, learners worldwide can move forward. (pp. 68-69)

Significance of the Study

Four facts insure the increase in distance education opportunities for the students of Riverside Community College. First, under an Executive Order of then Governor Wilson, the California Virtual University was begun in 1997 and in the 1998-99 budget was allocated $6.1M in funding (Toy, 1998). Although this funding was discontinued in 1999, the University of California agreed to "keep the web site running, so that students still have access to an electronic catalog of 2,550 online courses offered by California's colleges and universities" (Weiss, 1999). Second, the California Community Colleges are under a mandate from the Chancellor's Office to offer 20% of their courses via distance education by the year 2005 (Chancellor's Memo, personal communication, May 1996; Mora-Lopez, 1998). Third, Riverside Community College's President has responded to this mandate by offering release time to faculty members to develop distance education courses in their respective disciplines (S. G. Rotella, personal communication, March 19, 1998). Finally, in the summer of 1998, Riverside Community College's counseling department designed and produced a Guidance 45 "Introduction to College" telecourse, which will be mandated for all first-time/full-time college students in the Fall of 1999.

The above factors, coupled with the exponential growth of Internet use which is "unparalleled in the entire modern history of spoken and written communication" (Maddux, 1996, p. 64), indicate that the numbers of distance learning students will increase in the future at Riverside Community College. Since many of the students who will take advantage of distance education courses will either not be on campus at all, or be there when counseling and student support services are not traditionally offered, it is imperative that alternative ways to provide access to these services be explored. The web-based counseling support site proposed through this research is an example of one possible alternative method of offering students enrolled in distance learning courses, access to student support services.

The use of technology to deliver services at a time when the traditional means of delivering them are unavailable has proven very successful in settings outside of education. Consider for example the revolution that the use of technology has caused in the banking industry. Today it is possible to accomplish almost any banking transaction without speaking to a live person or physically handling any funds—at any hour of the day or night. What a dramatic difference from the days when one had to be physically present at the bank between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. in order to accomplish those same transactions.

Technology also offers the California Community Colleges' student services departments a solution to the problem of providing their services to a rapidly growing distance learning student population—who is often never physically present on campus.

In 1996, the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, Thomas Nussbaum, responded to the potential problem student services departments throughout the state were facing by initiating "Planning and Implementation Grants for the use of Technology to Increase Student Success." Three of the California Community Colleges, Saddleback, Coastline, and Cuesta, were successful recipients of these grants and are currently in the process of developing technology supported counseling and support services for students. Their initial project designs, which were presented at the 1998 Seventh Annual Board of Governors and California Community Colleges Conference in Palm Springs, California, indicated an effort to increase access to information and matriculation services for all interested students at their respective colleges through the use of technology (Hallberg, Rood, Montemayor-Angulo, Cruz, & Hall, 1998).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to design, develop and evaluate a web-based counseling support site, which included access to online counseling appointments, for Riverside Community college's online students. The results of this study provided a working example of a web-based counseling support site, whose goal was to provide access to services for students enrolled in distance education courses, and other students who do not have access to these services via traditional means and times. Riverside Community College's Student Services Department will be able to use this example as it expands its online services to include other areas such as financial, tutorial, and health services.

Research Questions

To these ends, an exploratory study was conducted which included a three-phased evaluation process including developmental evaluation (Phase I) and formative evaluation (Phases II and III). In agreement with Patton's (1997) definition of developmental evaluation (p.105), the purpose of Phase I was to "support project…development…[with] the evaluator as a part of the team whose members collaborate to conceptualize, design and test new approaches in a long-term, ongoing process of continuous improvement, adaptation, and intentional change." The focus of the formative evaluation phases (II and III) was on improvement—again in agreement with Patton's (1997) definition which states that "improvement remains the primary agenda" of formative evaluation (p. 68). The goals of phase one were a) to solicit recommendations from the online counseling committee for the design and development of the site and online counseling process, and b) to continually make modifications to improve both during this phase. The goal of phases two and three was to acquire counselor and student recommendations, respectively, for improvement of the site and the online counseling process prior to full implementation of both in the Fall of 1999. Phases one and two occurred primarily during the design and developmental stages of the site, while phase three occurred during a one-month pilot project, when students from Riverside Community College's two online courses were invited to receive counseling services online.

In an effort to gather information from both students and counselors that led to an improved web-based counseling site and improved online counseling services for Riverside Community College's online students, the following research questions were developed:

1. What are the perceptions of counselors with regard to the ease of navigation and use of the web-based counseling site?
2. Are counselors satisfied with the content included on the web-based counseling site
3. Do counselors have any specific concerns or suggestions for improvement of the site that should be addressed in the formative evaluation process?
4. Are counselors satisfied with the counseling services rendered via the web-based counseling site?
5. Will students who use the online environment to take courses also use this method to access counseling services?
6. What are the perceptions of online students with regard to the ease of navigation and use of the online counseling services?
7. Do online students have any specific concerns or suggestions for improvement of the process that should be addressed?
8. What online counseling services will these students desire?
9. Are online students satisfied with the online delivery method for counseling services?

Operational Definitions

The following operational definitions were used in this study and are listed to insure accurate understanding of the results.

For the purpose of this study the operational definition of a distance education course was, "A course that is delivered 51% through technology mediated instruction." This definition was chosen because, according to Mora-Lopez, the Distance Education Coordinator for the California Community College Chancellor's Office, it is the definition used in the California Community College System (personal communication, April 3, 1998).

Also for the purpose of this study, the term "at-risk" was used to refer to a community college student who is academically under-prepared or a member of a traditionally under-represented student group or both. The term "under-represented student group" refers to student groups who have not traditionally enrolled in college in the same proportion that they have been represented in the population. Some examples of traditionally under-represented student groups, as defined by Martens et al. (1995, p. 5) are, "reentry women, midlife career changers, students of color, physically challenged individuals, and non-native speakers of English."

Because counseling services which are offered through the counseling department at Riverside Community College are limited to academic and career counseling, for the purpose of this study, the term "counseling services" was limited to these two types of services.

Summary

The continuing development of distance learning opportunities for Riverside Community College students combined with the need for support services that this increasingly diverse and historically under-represented student population has demonstrated, necessitate the search for new ways to make these services accessible. Technology offers a possible solution to this problem. Most of the 106 community colleges in the California Community College System are facing this same concern, and have begun to look to the Internet as a means of addressing the problem. At the time of this project all 106 colleges had established a web presence, but most had limited their sites to "information only".

Through this study, Riverside Community College intended to move beyond information access and into the actual delivery of counseling services via synchronous as well as asynchronous communication tools. The following chapter will provide a review of the related literature with respect to changing student demographics and needs, successful counseling programs, distance learning research, and an examination of current practices in higher education with respect to online student services. Specifically, it will provide documentation of the "best practices" in the California Community College System's currently existing online student support services. The chapter will conclude with suggestions for information and access to be included in Riverside Community College's online-counseling site, which will be designed, developed and implemented as a result of this study.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

In his state of the Union Address on January 27, 1998, President Clinton emphasized the importance of an education beyond high school for all students as America moves into the 21st Century. After discussing the changes in grant, loan, scholarship and tax credit requirements that his administration has supported which will facilitate attendance in institutions of higher education, President Clinton said:

> I have something to say to every family listening to us tonight: Your children can go on to college. If you know a child from a poor family, tell her not to give up -- she can go on to college. If you know a young couple struggling with bills, worried they won't be able to send their children to college, tell them not to give up -- their children can go on to college. If you know somebody who's caught in a dead-end job and afraid he can't afford the classes necessary to get better jobs for the rest of his life, tell him not to give up -- he can go on to college. Because of the things that have been done, we can make college as universal in the 21st century as high school is today. And, my friends, that will change the face and future of America. (Clinton, 1998)

Throughout the United States of America, it is reasonable to believe that the bulk of the responsibility for the education of this new college student population, who in the recent past might not have attended college, will fall to the community colleges. In fact, as Martens, et al. (1995, p. 5) point out, "One of the defining characteristics of community colleges is their role as the point of first contact in higher education for new and nontraditional students--students with whom the higher education community has limited experience."

In the State of California where the Community Colleges System already operates under a completely "open-door" policy, this is especially true. According to Martens et al. (1995, p. 8), "One goal of the community college's open door policy is to increase access to higher education for segments of society previously excluded from the process." Enrollment trends, which indicate an increase in minority student enrollment in community colleges seem to indicate the success of this goal. As one can see from the following Mission Statement of the California Community Colleges, enrollment is open to anyone, and each institution attempts to meet the needs of all members of the community it serves:

> By law the California Community Colleges shall admit any California resident and may admit anyone who is over 18 years of age and who is capable of profiting from the instruction offered. The Colleges may also admit any nonresident, possessing a high school diploma or the equivalent thereof.
>
> Primary missions of the Colleges are to offer academic and vocational education at the lower division level for both younger and older students, including those persons returning to school. Another primary mission is to advance California's economic growth and global competitiveness through education, training, and services that contribute to continuous work force improvement. Essential and important functions of the Colleges include: remedial instruction for those in need of it and in conjunction with the school districts, instruction in English as a second language, adult noncredit instruction, and support services which help students succeed at the post-secondary level. Community Services is designated as a authorized function. To the extent funding is provided the Colleges may conduct institutional research concerning student learning and retention as is needed to facilitate their educational missions. (Chancellor's Office, 1998)

However, even in the California Community Colleges, which were already attempting to serve an ethnic, gender and age diversified student population, changes must occur to meet demands that will be placed on higher education in the future. Perhaps the two most influential factors that will continue to place these demands on institutions of higher education are (a) the increasingly diverse student population of the future, and (b) the exponential growth of the use of technology in education.

It is the belief of this author that student service professionals, who are often the first, and most continuous, point of contact between the college and the student, should be advocates for these necessary changes. Our institutions must adjust to the changing needs of the student who is now so different from the student for whom this educational system was designed—and student services professionals should lead this change. They have the most direct contact with the student and thus they have a responsibility to increase awareness of student needs within other members of the educational community. As Martens et al. (1995) state:

> How student affairs practitioners help their institutions identify and meet the challenges posed…may very well determine whether community colleges succeed or fail in the next century. As students change, the concepts underlying organizational structure, power, relationships, and leadership must evolve. Practitioners who continually question what they do, with whom they do it, and how each activity brings a student closer to success increase the chances that their institutions will make a difference to the millions of "new" students searching for their share of the American dream. (p. 14)

Theoretical and Empirical Justification for the Conduction of this Study

Changing Demographics

In the past, a typical college student in the United States would most likely have been a white male adolescent student from an upper middle class family, who was attending a four-year college on a full-time basis. In recent years, thanks primarily to the "open door" policy of the community colleges, access to higher education for all Americans has increased. In fact, today, the majority of higher education students are considered non-traditional—that is, they are often first-generation college students, female, over twenty-five, attending part-time, and often enrolled in two-year colleges. Enrollment figures demonstrate that the numbers of community college students have increased from "just over five hundred thousand in 1960 to over two million by 1970; by 1980, four million students attended community colleges, and the number approached six million by 1990" (Martens et al., 1995, p.5).

Riverside Community College's enrollment figures parallel this growth. According to the RCC Fact Book, "Over the past four Fall terms, RCC has grown from 20,555 students in Fall 1994 to 22,515 students in 1997. Projected enrollment by the year 2005 is more than 29,000 students" (Office of Institutional Research [OIR], 1998, p. II.5). Along with this population growth has come an increase in the percentages of Hispanic and African American students, and a decrease in the percentage of White students (OIR, 1998, p. II.12) The California Department of Finance projects that between the years 1990 and 2040, Riverside County's Latino population will increase from 26 percent to a projected 59 percent. The non-Latino white population is projected to decrease from 65 percent to 30 percent of the county population....Spanish is spoken at home by nearly 19 percent of the District population (Title III Grant Development Team, 1998, p. 9).

In a study addressing this changing population, Ramirez & Evans (1988) found that the greatest tendency to probation occurs either when students are new to college (freshman level) or new to the campus (junior level). They also discovered that traditionally under-represented students (Blacks and Hispanics) were over-represented among the probation and dismissal students, and that students in these two ethnic groups were "more frequently than their majority peers, the first generation to attend college, lacking role models, academic support and clear educational and career goals" (p. 36).

Twigg (1994, p. 14) states: "We are seeing dramatic changes in who is learning. Only 43 percent of the nation's undergraduates are under the age of 25 and attending a four-year college on a full-time basis. What we think of as traditional undergraduates--those who are 18-22 years old, attending full-time, and living in college housing--constitutes less than one-fourth of all students in higher education. Adult students, who are primarily part-time and nonresidential, now make up higher education's "New Majority."

Changing Needs of Students

This "New Majority" of college student enters higher education with some similar and some very different needs than the traditional student of the past. Patrick, Furlow & Donovan (1998, p. 30) state that, "Since colleges and universities are admitting academically under-prepared students, then an implicit obligation exists to provide academic intervention programs for them." Numerous studies of successful and non-successful college students have been conducted to determine exactly what the institution can do to contribute to an increase student retention and academic success.

Personal adjustment. While it is obvious that academic preparedness will have an effect on a student's ability to succeed in college, studies have demonstrated that other factors can be just as important to a college student's retention and academic success. Gerdes & Mallinckrodt (1994, p. 7) investigated the relationship of both actual and anticipated adjustments to college in three broad areas--emotional, social and academic--and discovered that, "personal adjustment and integration into the social fabric of campus life play a role at least as important as academic factors in student retention." They found that students tended to overestimate their ability to adjust academically and socially to college, and when the actual adjustment was more difficult, the students often became disillusioned and depressed, which sometimes resulted in that student dropping out of school.

Need to be involved in the community of the college. Other studies (Astin, 1984; Mallette & Cabrera, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1977; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; & Tinto, 1987) have demonstrated that students who feel that they are involved in the life of the college are much more likely to stay in school than those students who do not feel this involvement. Tinto, Goodsell, & Russo took this concept further in a 1993 study (as cited in Tinto, 1997) and demonstrated that it is imperative for students to feel connected and engaged in the smaller *community of the classroom.* In fact, their findings indicated that, especially for new students, this classroom involvement successfully links the student to the larger community of the college. Again, in a 1994 study of first-year experiences of students, Tinto & Goodsell found that social concerns initially outweigh academic concerns for the new and younger students.

In a 1997 study of the Coordinated Studies Programs (CSP) at Seattle Central Community College, Tinto demonstrated one successful way that this essential involvement in the community of the classroom can be provided. Students who participated in the CSP had the opportunity to share the curriculum and learn together. On the third page of his article, Tinto described the CSP:

> During a quarter, CSP's meet for a total of 11 to 18 hours each week in four to six hour blocks over two to four days. Generally all instructors are present and active in all class meetings. In addition to sharing the curriculum, students are required to share the experience of learning. They participate in cooperative learning activities that call for them to be interdependent learners (e.g., the learning of the group depends on the learning of each member of the group). In this way, students

> experience a form a interdisciplinary learning that requires active involvement with their peers.

Tinto's study posed the following two research questions, a) Does the program make a difference? and b) If it does, how does it do so? Tinto used both survey and a qualitative case study to gather information with which to answer his research questions. His sample population included a control group of students in the traditional classes and the experimental group of students in CSP. In his findings, Tinto validated the success of the learning community:

> First, it is evident that participation in a collaborative or shared learning group enables students to develop a network of support - a small supportive community of peers - that helps bond student to the broader social communities of the college while also engaging them more fully in the academic life of the institution….In this manner, collaborative learning settings enabled new students to bridge the academic-social divide that typically confronts students in these settings. They were able to meet two needs, social and academic, without having to sacrifice one in order to meet the other. …
>
> Second…course activities allowed students to connect their personal experiences to class content and recognize the diversity of views and experiences that marked differing members of the classroom. In opening up the conversation about what is known to many voices, student and faculty, the program led many students to discover…abilities they had not appreciated until then.
>
> Third…student perceptions of intellectual gain as well as academic performance as measured by GPA were greater in the learning community setting than in the more traditional settings…
>
> Finally, our findings reveal that it is possible to promote student involvement and achievement in settings where such involvement is not easily attained….the setting we studied was nonresidential. More importantly, the students we studied…have to attend to a multiplicity of obligations outside of college. For them, going to college is but one of a number of tasks to be completed during the course of a day.(p. 9)

As Tinto himself said on page 9 of this article, his research "moves our question about involvement beyond the recognition of its importance to the practical issue of how involvement can be generated in settings where involvement is not easily obtained." This author contends that one of the biggest challenges facing higher education is how to generate this necessary student involvement in the new "classrooms" of distance education. It seems reasonable to suggest that the student services' departments, who have been instrumental in generating this student involvement with the faculty, other students and the institution in general, *in the past,* are perhaps best prepared to continue to fill this role in the college of the 21st Century.

Community College Counseling Services

Counseling and other student support services have long been in existence to help students succeed academically and to increase retention in educational institutions—in other words, to provide "academic intervention programs" as suggested above. Although it has been reported that some community college administrators denigrate counseling services and place them low on a list of priorities (Cross & Fideler, 1989), in an extensive study by Mattox (1998), which involved chief student affairs officers at 172 two-year colleges, conflicting results were found. In fact, Maddox reported that, "Student services accomplished more and they performed better in 1994 than in 1965 based upon the perceptions of chief student services officers" (p. 9). Others (Fallon, 1997; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1995; Petropulos, 1998) also profess the belief that counseling services are of utmost importance to college students. In an interview published in the NASSP Bulletin (1995), Hoye, the director of the Federal National School-to-Work Office, emphasized that counselors would be crucial to the success of the School-to-Work program. Petropulos (1998) advises students to consider student services as a "top priority" when choosing an institution of higher education because, "these often-overlooked services can enrich your educational experience and increase your likelihood of success" (p. 90). In an article investigating the school counselors role in first generation college students' success, Fallon concludes:

> School counselors play a crucial role in helping first generation students achieve their full potential by motivating, educating, supporting, and believing in them.…Moreover, it is vitally important that counselors work to see that all students obtain the educational training that will be necessary if the country is to compete in the twenty-first century. (p8)

Although individual professionals such as those cited above, may acclaim or disclaim the worth of counseling services in education, one profound indicator of the success of counseling interventions is that the students who use the services consider them important to their ability to succeed in college. This is evidenced by the fact that, at many institutions, requests for appointments with counselors often exceed the number of available appointments.

> At Iowa State University, for example, on the opening day of classes last fall, requests for information or appointments with the student counseling service came in at the rate of one a minute. 'We thought the phones would never stop ringing,' recalls psychologist Terry Mason, service director. Beginning with that frantic first day, Mason and his staff of 12 professionals again set a new record for counseling Iowa State's 25,000 students--as they did the previous two academic years. The outlook for this year: another new record. (Elfin, 1994, p. 86)

At Riverside Community College, counselors are consistently fully-booked a week in advance, and during peak times of the year, students will wait for up to three hours to see a counselor on a "walk-in" basis (Dr. Jeanie Nishime, personal communication, November 4, 1998). However, perhaps the best tribute to the success of various counseling intervention programs can be found in the successful studies that have been conducted with "at-risk" college students.

Support programs for at-risk students

Programs for at-risk populations of students have continually demonstrated improvement in GPA and retention for those students who took advantage of available counseling services. An example of this is the intervention program (SAA) which was implemented at Cal State University, Long Beach to decrease the number of students on probation and dismissal--especially those from traditionally underrepresented ethnic groups--included a mandatory orientation workshop, bi-monthly meetings with a counselor, mid-term grade checks, participation in faculty advising sessions, and participation in other necessary student services such as financial aid and tutorial services. Ramirez & Evans' (1988, p. 42) findings clearly showed that students who participated in the SAA Program at CSULB "made noticeably greater gains toward good standing than the control population who did not participate in an on-going intervention program." The results of this study led Ramirez & Evans to conclude that: "The keys to effective intervention lie in programs being mandatory, evaluative, and comprehensive, systematically linked to campus support services, and professionally staffed to provide accurate personal and academic direction" (p. 44).

The CORE Program, which Patrick, Furlow & Donovan investigated in 1998, incorporated the use of intensive academic advising in conjunction with a freshman experience course. The course included content focused on career and educational planning, study and decision making skill acquisition, academic policy information and personal adjustment to college life. The findings of this study indicated that the students who participated in the CORE program persisted at a rate of 13.27 percent better than NON-CORE students. In addition, the authors noted a "ripple effect within the campus community" and cited an increased faculty awareness of the services provided by the university, an increased willingness on the part of the faculty to refer students to appropriate staff, increases in student services offered, and a renewed confidence on the part of the students in student services as evidenced by and increased use of the various services (p. 33). The conclusion proposed by this study was that "an extended orientation program may serve as a viable alternative to traditional academic advising with academically under-prepared students" (p. 34).

Another example is Kansas State University, which offers its probation students a 10-week Support Seminar which, although voluntary, has a mandatory attendance policy once the student elects to participate. The program incorporates a counseling component, study and time management skill-building exercises, and problem solving and decision making activities. The findings showed that, "Participants demonstrated improvement over non-participants on all indexes. As compared with non-participants, participants got off probation at a 36% higher rate, maintained enrollment in the college at a 52% higher rate, withdrew from the university at a less than 51% rate, graduated at a 33% higher rate" (Newton, 1990, p. 186).

Students on probation at William Rainey Harper College in Palatine, Illinois must participate in a success-oriented intervention program which also involves meeting with a counselor. Results of Lucas's 1990 study showed that 73% of the students who participated in the program returned the following semester, and 84% were able to identify factors that led to a low GPA. Two of the most commonly cited of these factors were poor study habits and poor time management skills. 85% of the students in this program stated that their counselor had helped them develop a plan to overcome these factors and improve their GPA. However, when asked how this probation program could be improved, one of the most common responses was to increase counseling help.

Intrusive intervention programs

Although most community college students have the option of voluntary seeking academic counseling services, Kriner & Shriberg (1992) point out that counselors might be successful in efforts made to actively seek out those students who are experiencing academic difficulty. Their study involved a letter of concern sent to students who had achieved below a 2.0 GPA in their first semester of college. The letter invited the student to make a counseling appointment and was followed up by a telephone call from the counselor. The results of this study showed a significant increase in GPA for those students who received intrusive counseling contact when compared with students who did not.

Another example of a successful intrusive counseling program is the SIR program which was implemented at Henderson State University in 1984 in an effort to increase the retention rate of probationary and first-time suspended students. SIR participants were required to meet with a counselor twice a semester, meet with a faculty academic advisor three times per semester, attend two hours of supervised study each week and submit a detailed report of activities each week for 10 weeks. After four years of the SIR program, the probation rate at Henderson fell from 10.2% to 8.2%, and the suspension rate was reduced from 5.8% to 4.7%. In addition, most of the credit for the five-year 22%

enrollment increase was attributed to the implementation and continuance of the SIR program (Garnett, 1990).

The findings of a study by Robbins, Lese, & Herrick (1993, p 347) indicated that "low goal directed students need strong role models and active guidance to supply the direction necessary to identify and act on the many tasks required of successful college life. For these individuals, classes should incorporate a support component and strong teacher modeling....For those who are high goal directed, freshman orientation courses and other forms of information-based support may improve the experience of college life." This study supports the concept that students who have not yet set definitive educational goals will probably need more contact with faculty and support services than the telecourse itself will provide.

Gerdes & Mallinckrodt (1994, p. 7) also differentiated between the counseling intervention needs of the poor vs. the good academic student and suggest that students in poor academic standing need counseling interventions such as "career planning, assistance in determining academic goals, and [workshops covering topics such as] time management, study skills, anxiety management and appropriate course loads." The final implication that Gerdes & Mallinckrodt discuss is that all students will probably benefit from increased contact with faculty members.

All of the above studies indicate that the growing "new" community college student, who is often "at risk" of failing or dropping out, will benefit from access to student support services. Yet because of the non-educational demands on their time (i.e.: work, family responsibilities, etc.), these are the very students who will probably have the most difficulty accessing those very services. Higher education in general and the community college specifically, must find a solution to this problem.

Role of the Community College Counselor

Although the following statement was written with the K-12 school counselor in mind, it can easily be applied to the community college counselor as well. In fact, Carroll (1991, p. 4) found that when community college counselors were asked to brainstorm a list of their roles, duties and services, the results were "remarkably similar to the services offered by senior high school counselors as described in the K-12 Developmental Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program."

> One major conclusion seems evident from this synthesis of 30 years of empirical work and professional statements: School counseling interventions have a substantial impact on students' educational and personal development. Individual and small-group counseling, classroom guidance, and consultation activities seem to contribute directly to students' success in the classroom and beyond, and school counselors should spend the majority of their time performing these interventions. Coordination activities should be confined to those that improve the program's efficiency and accountability. It seems clear that policy-makers and practitioners should ensure that every student has the opportunity to participate in a comprehensive school counseling program. (Borders, 1992, p. 14)

Otwell (1997, p. 1) discusses the issues that counselors must consider when faced with budgetary constraints that might threaten their jobs. Although this article written about elementary school counselors, community college counselors are facing similar circumstances. She states that "school board members faced with the dilemma of allocating limited tax dollars want to know if expenditures for counseling rather than for curriculum needs or teacher allotments are justified." This is especially true in the community colleges where counselors are considered faculty members, but do not earn state moneys for the college through the counseling services unless the services are offered in the form of a college class. In other words, for all counseling activities other than teaching classes, the counselors at community colleges are an expense to the institution not a revenue generating entity. It is reasonable for school board members, college presidents, faculty members and tax payers to want to know if the money spent on counseling services is helping. Otwell encourages elementary school counselors to "demonstrate that they have a greater effect on students' academic achievement than schools without counselors" (p. 1). At the community college level, counselors also need to demonstrate a positive effect on student performance.

Community college counseling is different from elementary counseling in one major respect—elementary counselors are working with a captive audience—community college counselors are not. College attrition rates have long been a concern addressed in the literature, and especially in the two-year community colleges. In 1975, Austin reported that the two-year community colleges had the highest dropout rates (mean of 59%) and in 1987 Tinto showed a 46% completion rate for students at a two-year institution. Riverside Community College is no exception to this problem. In the 1994-95 Student Retention Study, RCC's Office of Institutional Research reported that approximately 50 percent of first-time students left RCC before the end of their second semester. Less than one-third of the students were enrolled by the end of their fourth semester and less than one percent graduated. Fallon, (1997, p. 8) reports that "School counselors play a crucial role in helping first-generation students achieve their full potential by motivating, educating, supporting and believing in them. Counselors must become cognizant of the needs of first generation students and their families to ensure that society realizes its goal of equal educational opportunity for all citizens."

In an attempt to meet the changing social, educational and career needs of a culturally diverse student population, community college counselors in Connecticut developed a "specific framework in which to organize tasks and more firmly establish the professional role of student development educators." (Carroll, 1991, p. 1) The description of counseling roles presented in this framework follow:

- The counselor as COORDINATOR: integrates resources from the college and the wider community to establish a complete network of services for personal/social counseling as well as career development.
- The counselor as CONSULTANT: offers professional expertise to administration, faculty, staff and other college community members on issues ranging from freshman recruitment and orientation programs to retention and dropout prevention.
- The counselor as COUNSELOR: provides a broad range of opportunities for problem solving and addressing personal issues in helping students develop as total people in group as well as individual sessions.
- The counselor as TEACHER: gives small and large group instruction on topics ranging from drug and alcohol abuse to study skills, time management and improving one's self concept.
- The counselor as MANAGER: plans, implements and evaluates the overall system necessary for supporting, maintaining and improving the comprehensive developmental counseling program." (p. 3)

The challenge now facing college and university counseling and student services departments is how to continue to meet the changing needs of a different student population as we move into the 21st Century. The good news is that there is evidence that student services departments have not remained stagnant. In his comparative study of student services conducted in 1965 and 1994, Mattox (1998) found that all student services provided in 1965 also were supported in 1994. He also found that "Seven service functions have been added to the services provided by two-year colleges since 1965, bringing the total to 28 student service functions provided by colleges in 1994" (p. 6). While it is encouraging that student service departments have adjusted to some of the changing institutional needs, there is little doubt that student services departments must continue to change to remain congruent with the students they serve. Perhaps one of the most obvious challenges facing student service departments is that of access to services. As Martens et al. (1995) state: "'New' students often need support services twenty-hours a day, seven days a week. Because these students have extensive off-campus commitments or transportation problems, services must be easily accessible on campus or available off campus via the telephone, the television or the computer" (p. 10).

This need for access to services will be exacerbated by the increased use of distance education in higher education because distance education students *will not be on campus to access traditional student services*. If counselors want to take part in the design of their own destinies, it seems clear that they must act now to make adjustments to the demographic and technological changes effecting educational institutions today. As Ancis (1998) warns,

> Counseling programs that do not give consideration to negotiating the multiple demands of faculty, students, and a technologically oriented university may find themselves driven by a rapidly changing system. This may take the form of classes and programs designed primarily by administrators, corporations, and information technology consultants....Counseling programs must therefore be proactive in deciding how distant learning initiatives can advance both faculty and students' professional development." (p. 142)

Existing Studies of Successful Online Courses in Institutions of Higher Education

Although the use of online courses in higher education is in the embryonic stages of development, preliminary data seems to indicate that it can be a successful method of instruction and a preferred method of learning for some students. Kubala (1998, p. 71), who has designed and taught two online graduate courses in a doctoral program at the University of Central Florida believes that, "Online instruction on the Internet is in many ways a form of individualized instruction. It requires regular contact between the student and the instructor for maximum learning to occur" (p. 71). In addition to the required face-to-face orientation session, Kubala established a class bulletin board where both he and the students could post and respond to questions and discussion items. Email was used for more personal communication between Kubala and the students, and for the submission of weekly quizzes and required research papers. Kubala chose not to use chat rooms in his courses because he considered the synchronous communication requirement to be a major deterrent. This philosophy also led him to find alternate methods for students to participate in the required final examination for his courses. In lieu of attending the face-to-face meeting at the University of Central Florida, this exam could be taken at a distance. "If it was taken at a distance, a proctor was selected at a community college testing center that was near the student's home. Many community colleges have testing centers where make-up exams are routinely administered to community college students who were ill or otherwise unable to take an exam when it was scheduled. The personnel in these centers understand the need for security. They are very responsible professionals and I felt comfortable in having them handle my final exams" (p. 72).

After three semesters of teaching his two doctorate level online courses, Kubala's (1998) evaluation results are very encouraging. He found that: All respondents said that Web-based courses met their learning needs. All respondents said they would recommend these types of distance learning courses to their friends. In addition, an overwhelming majority of the students (94%) said that they felt adequately connected to the instructor--more connected or similarly connected as compared with traditional face-to-face classes. 81% of the students said they preferred taking Web-based courses. Kubala also indicated that his qualitative research showed that students enjoyed the flexibility and convenience of the online courses, and most of the problems that were mentioned with the courses were of a technical nature such as, "I had trouble with my Internet provider," or "The technology was quite a challenge at times. My system would go down and I would lose all the content I had generated" (p.73).

Dr. Jerald G. Schutte of California State University at Northridge decided to discover for himself if online courses can be as successful as the in-class version of the class, because he wanted to "provide some hard, experimental evidence that didn't seem to exist anywhere" (McCollum, 1997, p. A23). He divided his statistics class into two groups and had one group attend class as usual while the other group used the Internet to complete assignments, post questions and meet with the instructor in chat rooms. In fact, "after an orientation session, the students in the virtual class went to Dr. Schutte's classroom only for their mid-term and final exams. On both tests, Dr. Schutte found, the wired students outscored their traditional counterparts by an average of 20 percent" (McCollum, 1997, p. A23).

David Diaz is an Instructor at Cuesta Community College who decided that he would develop a web-based course as an option for his health education students. Although this is the first time the course has been offered, David had some preliminary observations to share at the Seventh Annual Board of Governors and California Community Colleges Conference. He stated that the students in his distance education course scored higher on the mid-term exam than the students in his regular education course, but that there was a much higher drop rate in the distance course--26% as compared to 7 1/2 % in the regular course. Diaz also stated that the web-based course allows him to deliver things that he couldn't deliver without it. He sees the Web as a way to "add value" to a course and strives to "create the human bond--to make the connection that I try so hard to achieve in the 18 weeks that I have with my regular education students" (Diaz, 1998).

In a personal interview, Chris Dede made the following observations about his experiences with distance teaching:

1. Students learn more than they could have learned in the best face to face class I could have taught.
2. The studies that have shown "No significant difference" between face-to-face and distance education courses are dead-wrong.

He went on to explain that these studies made the mistake of comparing two different methods of instruction. In his opinion, research in distance education needs to be conducted on courses which combine different teaching methods, media and strategies and use the most appropriate of these to achieve the desired results in each specific situation. He stated, “I believe that any 3 media beat any one—and that includes face-to-face. Learning Styles is more complex than kinesthetic, auditory, visual and symbolic--we need to discover how students learn and use every method to try to reach those learning styles" (Personal Communication, April 28, 1998).

Preliminary results such as those cited above indicate that the online student will be more successful when supported in his/her educational endeavors—just as the traditional classroom student has been.

Distance Learning at Riverside Community College

The Telecourse

Historically, the distance learning opportunities for Riverside Community College students have been limited to telecourse offerings, which were either purchased from national organizations or created "in-house" by faculty members. These telecourses are broadcast over local educational television and cable channels. For students who do not have access to these television stations, video tapes of the telecourse lessons are available for check-out through the campus libraries.

In order to complete a three-unit telecourse at Riverside Community College, students will typically watch two 30-minute lessons per week and attend five on-campus meetings during the 18 weeks of the semester. In the Spring of 1999, Riverside Community College offered 22 of these telecourses, ranging from Astronomy to Spanish, and including a new telecourse offering of Guidance 45—Introduction to College.

Counseling Telecourse at Riverside Community College. Guidance 45 is a course which was developed by Riverside Community College's counseling department in response to Section 55520 of the Matriculation Regulations, which mandates that all California Community Colleges provide their students certain minimum services. Among these are, "orientation and pre-orientation services designed to provide nonexempt students and potential students, on a timely basis, information concerning college procedures and course scheduling, academic expectations, financial assistance, and any other matters the college or district finds appropriate; counseling and advisement; and assistance in developing a student educational plan" (Board of Governors, 1993, pp.13 & 14).

Preliminary research conducted by Riverside Community College's Office of Institutional Research in 1998 demonstrated that students who successfully completed the Guidance 45 course had a 14% higher persistent rate than those not taking the course. In response to the results of this study, the District is in the process of conducting an extended research study to determine if Guidance 45 should be mandated for students who meet the following criteria:

- first-time students,
- who are enrolled in 6 or more units, and
- have indicated one of the following as their educational goal: completion of a degree; completion of a certificate; and/or transfer to a four year institution.

If Riverside Community College's Board of Education mandates this course for students in the above categories who enter RCC in the Fall of 1999, at least 50 additional sections of Guidance 45 will need to be offered. In preparation for this mandate, qualified high school faculty members are currently being recruited and trained to teach this course, and the telecourse is being adapted to meet the needs of this audience of students.

Open Campus

In addition to telecourses, Riverside Community College has made a commitment to offering another type of distance education opportunity for its students—online courses. In the summer of 1998 the first "Open Campus Faculty Academy" was held. The purpose of this academy, which consists of a week of intense training, is to encourage faculty to create online courses for Riverside Community College to offer its students. The faculty members are not paid to attend the academy, but they receive a $3,000.00 stipend when they complete an online course. For the initial academy, the faculty members were administratively chosen and invited to attend, but subsequent academy attendees have been selected through an application process. There were 68 applications for the 12 openings in the second online academy, which was held in January of 1999. Future academies are planned for summer and January intercessions until all interested full-time faculty members have received the opportunity to participate in the academy (Dr. Anthony Beebe, personal communication, May 20, 1998).

Riverside Community College offered its first two faculty-developed online courses in the Spring of 1999. All three sections of these courses were full by the second day of telephone registration, and according to Dr. Andrews, the Vice-President of Academic Affairs, "RCC could have filled many more sections of each class." Dr. Andrews also indicated that 20 more online courses are currently being developed by the faculty who have attended the online academies (personal communication, February 2, 1999).

The development of telecourses, the mandating of Guidance 45 which will result in an increased use of the Guidance 45 telecourse, and the administrative and faculty commitment to the development of online courses, coupled with the receptiveness that students have shown toward distance education courses, all indicate that distance learning will continue to grow at Riverside Community College. This likely growth in distance learning necessitates the exploration of alternate avenues through which to make student support services available to the distance learning student.

Student Support Services for Online Students

This author submits that the emphasis on the use of distance learning opportunities in higher education is an excellent example of one of the settings to which Tinto (1997) refers with his timely question about how student involvement "can be generated in settings where involvement is not easily obtained" (p. 6). Leaders in higher education must discover ways to involve students in the community of the classroom and the community of the college in this relatively new world of distance education. If they do not do this, it is likely that the "New Majority" of older, academically-under-prepared, and historically under-represented community college student will not succeed in this setting. Some colleges across the nation have taken steps to begin to address the issue of providing services to the distance education student.

Online Student Services in Colleges Outside of the California Community Colleges

The Internet has proven to be a great avenue through which colleges and universities can make information available to those interested in accessing it. Most institutions of higher education have established a web presence, and an exploration of approximately 200 of these sites demonstrates that most have included some information about their student services departments. These online student services' sites can generally be divided into two categories: information dissemination and/or service delivery. Although most of the student service sites that are currently online fit into the first category—information dissemination, some have actually moved into the delivery of services in such ways as to provide students with access to grades online, ability to file applications, asynchronous communication via email, and access to financial services. The federal government has established a web site that will actually allow students to file an application for federal financial aid online (http://www.byu.edu/about/). It is apparent that the Internet offers an inexpensive and speedy way to make information available to anyone, anywhere—as long as they have the hardware, software and access to that information. It is also apparent that colleges and universities are expanding the use of this avenue for marketing, recruiting, enrolling and providing access to student services. A few examples of "best practices" in online student services were found in the following sites:

- Academic Advising Resources on the Internet
- Bowling Green State University
- Brigham Young University
- CollegePrep 101 Oklahoma State University
- Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
- Johnson County Community College
- Southern Illinois University
- University of Minnesota student services

Academic Advising Resources on the Internet

The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) maintains a web site entitled *Academic Advising Resources on the Internet*. This site aids college counselors and academic advisors in their exploration of current student services information that is available through the use of new technologies. It also provides an avenue for those interested in using technology to enhance academic advising to communicate with each other. The creators of this site recognize that technology will have a significant impact on the delivery of student services in the future and their strategic goals are to facilitate efforts to use technology effectively in this endeavor by striving to:

- Identify contact people for existing and developing technologies.
- Determine and report on the current status of technological support systems for academic advising.
- Publish monograph: "The Role of Technology in Academic Support Services."
- Study the effectiveness of technologies currently used. (Academic Advising, 1998)

From the home page of this site, there are many choices for links to a wide variety of information, such as: Academic And Career Counseling; Colleges And Universities; Higher Education And Technology; Jobs In Higher Education; & Student Activities And Student Affairs. Each of these links takes the viewer to pages of links to colleges and universities who are currently providing these services and information online. For example, the Academic and Career Counseling link led to a page of links to Academic Advising Office web pages for about 50 colleges and universities. Also included on this page was information for students about "What Can I do with a Major In?"; links to other colleges and universities by majors; links to "Innovative Uses of the Internet" by colleges and universities; and a link to an online introduction to college course. This site provides a great service for those who are looking for good examples of current uses of technology to deliver online student support. It received several honors including being:

- ranked as one of the Top 500 Sites on the Internet by IWAY Magazine.
- designated Kaplan Student Choice by the Stanley H. Kaplan Educational Center.
- awarded a Magellan three star rating by the McKinley Group.
- ranked us among the top 5 percent of sites on the Internet by John Maczynski's Information Service. (Academic Advising, 1998)

Johnson County Community College

This college has an enormous amount of information available for its students—including such information as enrollment, assessment and testing , study guides, how to get started at Johnson College, and degrees and programs available, but there was little interactivity within most of the site. For example, although the student was able to view the schedule of placement testing, he/she was not able to sign up for a test online, but rather was given a phone number to call and make an appointment. However, there was some interactivity in the counseling component of this site, which provided the student with links to any full-time or adjunct counselor's brief bio and picture, and then allowed the student to contact that counselor via email. The student was not able to schedule an online counseling appointment (http://www.johnco.cc.ks.us/).

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

The students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University obviously use the web extensively, as evidenced by two facts: a) the students each maintain their own "Student Web Page" which are linked to the universities' home page and b) the student services' page provides both information and extensive interactivity. On the initial student services page, the student has access to two columns of links—"Student Information" and "Student Services." The information links led to all the different college, department and program information such as: the college calendar, president's welcome, bookstore, academic departments etc. These sites were non-interactive and purely informational in nature. However, the student services links led to a page where the student had to agree to a "pin policy" and then had to use his/her "pin" to access such information as: financial aid, counseling, and discussion forums (http://www.db.erau.edu/services/students.html).

Southern Illinois University

This institution provides a wide range of online information which includes access to the Counseling Center, Disability Support Services, Financial Aid Office, Intramural-Recreational Sports, Student Center, Student Development, Student Health Programs, University Career services, University Housing, and Campus Ministry. Again, this site seems to provide access to information only. For example, students can get phone numbers to call for an appointment for counseling but can not actually make the appointment online, and obviously, can not meet with a counselor online. The lack of security on the pages indicates that student personal information is unavailable for individual access (http://www.siu.edu/staffair/index.html).

University of Minnesota

The University of Minnesota also does a good job of providing information and phone numbers for the different student services that they offer such as financial aid, admissions, transcripts and answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ's). The navigability of the site was enhanced by the use of a frame on the left hand side of the student services page which held links to the different student services. This site offers no interactivity for the user (http://www.mrs.umn.edu/courses/ss/).

Brigham Young University

The primary goal of Brigham Young University's web site appears to be to provide online information for the audience of students looking for the "right" college to attend. This information includes the mission statement of the college, the honor code, FAQ's, and even an online application for undergraduates. Graduate students can request that information be mailed to them but cannot yet apply online.

Although the web page which will eventually lead to online student services for those already attending BYU is currently under construction, it looks as if it is going to provide both information and interactivity. It will be password and pin protected, and will allow students to register for classes online, add and drop classes, print out their schedules, look up grades, and much more. Even though these services and information are not yet available to students online, BYU has already begun to address the potential problem of inequitable access by including a plan for the establishment of "access kiosks" throughout the campus (http://www.byu.edu/about/).

Bowling Green State University

The career planning portion of Bowling Green State University's web site offers students an opportunity to actually complete a four-step career planning process online. The first step is an online career self-assessment, after which, during steps 2 and 3, the user is able to investigate options based on this assessment, evaluate career choices and discover job opportunities on campus and in the community to get experience in this field. The fourth step offers the student the opportunity to begin conducting an actual job search. An interesting point about this career planning activity is that it is not restricted to Bowling Green State University students. It is a great resource to anyone online (http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/).

Oklahoma State University

Oklahoma State University offers an online course called "CollegePrep 101." This course is an introduction to college for high school students. It is a set of well organized sequential lessons which a student can complete at his/her own pace. The instructor uses photographs, guest speakers and a sense of humor to present the various information but there is very little opportunity for interactivity on the part of the student, and the course does not include links to external sources of information (http://www2.okstate.edu/lam2717/).

Specific Suggestions for Successful Creation of a Web-Based Counseling-Support Site

The Riverside Community College counseling site and process which will be developed, implemented and evaluated as a result of this study, will move beyond offering "information only" and into providing an opportunity for students to receive student support services online. It will incorporate the current "best practices" from other college and university online student services, such as those described in the preceding section, as well as those "best practices" currently being discovered through the California Community College Chancellor's technology grant projects, which are described in the following section. The primary goal of this site will be to provide Riverside Community College students with an alternative means of accessing counseling services, which for the past 82 years have been offered only via the face-to-face method.

Online Student Services in the California Community Colleges

Currently, all 106 of the California Community Colleges have established a web presence. Most provide access to "information only" on their sites, but three California Community Colleges, Saddleback, Coastline and Cuesta have received grants from the Chancellor's Office to improve access to and delivery of student services via electronic means. These grants have been provided with the intent that models can be developed for the other community colleges to use to address some of the access and delivery problems we are facing as we move into the realm of distance learning in the California Community College System. Although these grant projects are all currently in the developmental stages, Riverside Community College will incorporate their successful practices, as they are discovered, into its own model for online student services which will be developed as a result of this project.

Saddleback Community College

Saddleback Community College allows the counselors Internet access and use of E-mail for communication with students, faculty and other counselors. The counseling department had input into the development of their own "Counselor Information Web Site" which provides access to various URL's that assist them in providing the most current and accurate transfer information to students. A link from this page allows Saddleback's counseling staff to quickly navigate into the password-protected student information system which houses such data as student schedules, academic histories, grade point averages, class rosters and enrollment information. Saddleback's future plans for the incorporation of technology into the counseling department's goals include the creation of an interactive "Student Information Page" which will allow students' to enter and update their own information such as application information, present status, educational goal, etc. They also plan to enable students to check their own progress and will provide an electronic drop-in/chat-room for student-counselor exchange of information (http://www.saddleback.cc.ca.us/).

Coastline Community College

Since 25-30% of Coastlines' courses are offered via distance education, it is not surprising that the counseling department at this institution is also striving to discover alternative ways to meet the needs of its rapidly increasing distance education clientele. In June of 1997, Coastline Community College received verification that its grant proposal for the development of an Online Student Services Center was funded by the California Community Colleges' Chancellor's Office. The members of the target audience for the services provided through this grant were the distance education and working adult students. In the grant narrative, the authors established the need for services for these students: "Each of these constituencies has been inadequately reached by existing matriculation service delivery strategies....Distance education and working adult students, because of location and time constraints, find it far more difficult to access matriculation services and are more likely to be unaware of assessment requirements and to view orientation, counseling and formal Educational Plan processes as obstacles to the achievement of their educational and occupational goals" (Chapman & Drew, 1998, p.1).

Although they are currently only in the developmental stages of the development of their Online Student Services Center, their future delivery methods for counseling and advisement services include the Internet, cable-casts of counseling videos, and video-conferencing. They also plan to incorporate both a formative and summative evaluation of their online counseling services and will disseminate their evaluation results via both printed materials and web-based reports.

Cuesta Community College

Cuesta College is the third of the California Community College's that is currently in the process of exploring alternatives to face-to-face counseling services. According to Tim Clow, Cuesta College Counseling Department Chairperson, they are currently working with Datatel to develop an electronic student educational plan for use in conjunction with Datatel's student system software. Cuesta's future plans include the development of kiosks which will allow student access to academic information such as academic history, major requirements, transfer institutions and online access to counselors (personal communication, March 12, 1998).

Summary

The "at-risk" student population is growing in the California Community Colleges while at the same time, distance learning opportunities are increasing throughout higher education. Student support services, such as intrusive counseling intervention programs, have demonstrated success in increasing retention and GPA of the "at-risk" student population in face-to-face educational settings. As this student population moves into the world of distance learning, institutions of higher education have the responsibility to provide opportunities for them to continue to access student support services within this environment. A survey of existing college and university web sites indicate that, while most institutions—both within and outside of the California Community College system—have established a web presence, many are restricted to information access only rather than actual online access to the support services.

Current "best practices" in online student support will be used to design and develop a web-based counseling support site for Riverside Community College. The web-based site will be evaluated for content and clarity by counseling faculty and students, and the online counseling process will be evaluated for ease of use and satisfaction with this medium of delivering counseling services by both students and counselors involved in a pilot project.

Chapter III

Methodology

The goal of the web-based counseling support site proposed in this study was to provide access to student support services' information and access to online counseling appointments for the Riverside Community College students who were enrolled in RCC's two initial online courses. The site was designed incorporating the following suggestions for "optimal design of instructional sites to better serve users" (Shotsberger, 1996, p47).

- Less is often more…organize information in an easily comprehensible format…limit pages to avoid excessive scrolling;
- Provide consistency…all linked pages should look alike…enhance navigability with options to go to 'previous', 'next' or 'home' pages using buttons that look the same and are in the same place on each page; and
- Don't waste the user's time…do not allow inappropriate, extraneous, or redundant materials to be included on the site. (p. 49)

The web site content was developed based on the current "best practices" from the other 105 California Community Colleges. However, the goal of Riverside Community College's counseling site was to move beyond the *information* which is the content of most of the other California Community College's student service sites, and into *interactivity*. This goal was based on (a) the numerous studies that have demonstrated that the greater the students' contact with faculty members, the higher the levels of learning that the student will accomplish (Astin, 1984; Friedlander, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1997) and (b) the belief that counseling is more than information—it requires interaction between the student and the counselor.

To this end, Riverside Community College's site provides opportunities for asynchronous as well as synchronous communication between counselors and students via published information, email, and individual counseling appointments. In an effort to better serve students, the online environment was kept consistent with that used in Riverside Community College's online courses. This allowed students who were taking the online courses to easily access, navigate and utilize online counseling.

The process for online counseling was designed in congruence with counseling services already in existence for the on-campus students at Riverside Community College. For example, students must have an application and transcripts from any other college on file at Riverside Community College prior to making a counseling appointment. This requirement was enforced in the online environment as well. Counseling support staff who would be making the online appointments were an integral part of the development process.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to design, develop and evaluate a web-based counseling support site, which included access to online counseling appointments, for Riverside Community college's online students. The results of this study provides a working example of a web-based counseling support site, whose goal was to provide access to services for students enrolled in distance education courses, and other students who do not have access to these services via traditional means and times. Riverside Community College's Student Services Department will be able to use this example as it expands its online services to include other areas such as financial, tutorial, and health services.

Research Design

The very nature of the development of web-based student support services lent itself to developmental evaluation, which, as described by Patton (1997), is:

> Processes undertaken for the purpose of supporting program …*development*…The evaluator is part of a team whose members collaborate to conceptualize, design, and test new approaches in a long-term, ongoing process of continuous improvement, adaptation, and intentional change. (p. 105)

Although this theme permeated every aspect of the design and development of the web-based counseling support site and the implementation of an online counseling pilot project, the developmental evaluation process begun during Phase I of this study, will extend far beyond the limits of this study. In fact, because of the continual changes in technological tools available and the constantly changing needs of students, developmental evaluation of Riverside Community College's online student services will most likely never end. It will be continually adapting to change, which is a major component of developmental evaluation (Patton, 1997, p. 106).

This study was also exploratory in nature. Riverside Community College needs to determine who comprises its online students, if they are representative of the general student population, and what services they desire from the college in an online environment. Because the Spring, 1999 semester was the first semester that online courses were offered at the college, no baseline data about this student population had been studied. This study provided that descriptive baseline data.

To further the goal of having online counseling services available to students at Riverside Community College, the focus of this study was to design, develop and implement these services. The evaluation method used for this study was three-phased—with an emphasis during Phase I on *development*, referred to as developmental evaluation by Patton (1997, p. 105), and during Phases II and III on *improvement*, referred to as formative evaluation by Patton (1997, P. 68). According to Patton (1997), formative evaluation differs from developmental evaluation because it "carries a bias about making something better rather than just making it different (p. 106). Patton also differentiates formative evaluation from summative evaluation because formative "tends to be more open ended, gathering varieties of data about strengths and weaknesses with the expectation that both will be found and each can be used to inform an ongoing cycle of reflection and innovation" (p. 68). The formative evaluation process, which was begun during this study, will also extend far beyond the limits of this study because of Riverside Community Colleges' ongoing efforts to improve counseling services and meet the changing needs of students.

In an effort to gather information from both students and counselors that led to an improved web-based counseling site for Riverside Community College's online students, two surveys utilizing both closed and open-ended questions were used to solicit information with which to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the perceptions of counselors with regard to the ease of navigation and use of the web-based counseling site?
2. Are counselors satisfied with the content included on the web-based counseling site?
3. Do counselors have any specific concerns or suggestions for improvement of the site that should be addressed in the formative evaluation process?
4. Are counselors satisfied with the counseling services rendered via the web-based counseling site?
5. Will students who use the online environment to take courses also use this method to access counseling services?
6. What are the perceptions of online students with regard to the ease of navigation and use of the online counseling services?
7. Do online students have any specific concerns or suggestions for improvement of the process that should be addressed?
8. What online counseling services will the online students desire?
9. Are online students satisfied with the online delivery method for counseling services?

Instruments

Two instruments were developed for this study, the printed survey for the counselors' evaluations which was used in Phase II (See Appendix A), and the electronic student survey which was used in Phase III (See Appendix B). The development process for both surveys included collaboration between Riverside Community College's counseling department and its office of institutional research. Members of these departments, including both the director of institutional research and the dean of counseling, as well as other counselors and a research specialist, comprised the expert panel for this study. Members of the expert panel participated in revisions to numerous drafts of each survey and provided content validation for both of the surveys.

Data Sources & Collection of Data

Phase I

This phase was the design phase of the study and it included:

- Ascertaining current "best practices" of other California Community Colleges with respect to web-based student support services;
- Designing Riverside Community College's student support services' web pages; and
- Determining the process for providing actual online counseling services at Riverside Community College.

This phase was informal and was the function of this writer's professional activities.

To begin this phase of the project, volunteers were solicited from the various programs and services within the counseling department who investigated the web sites of the other 105 California Community Colleges to determine *best practices*. These counselors then met to discuss exemplary sites and agree upon the desired content for Riverside Community College's student services' web pages. The district's director of marketing, who is currently responsible for development and maintenance of Riverside Community College's web site, attended this meeting to discuss district requirements for uniformity throughout the site. A copy of the Riverside Community College student services' site flow-chart, which was developed at this meeting, is included in Appendix C. Each member of the committee then took responsibility for developing a paper representation of the content that should be included for a specific service area. These papers were submitted to the chair of the committee, this writer, who was then responsible for the development of the web pages.

After the initial development of the web site, four counselors and the dean of counseling at RCC, who are proficient users of the Internet, were asked to use the site, print out the pages and make notations of suggested changes for ease of navigation, content clarity, and suggested modifications to content. These suggestions were used to modify the site and summaries of their input are presented as part of the findings.

Because of their experience with technology, this group of people, one added member from the counseling support staff, and this writer became the "online counseling committee" and continued to meet to develop the process through which online counseling would be offered at Riverside Community College. Since the district administration and faculty had already chosen WebCT as the environment through which online courses would be offered at the college, the online counseling committee determined that, in order to facilitate student use, online counseling should also occur in the WebCT environment.

Phase II

After the site and process were modified based on the suggestions from phase one, all 18 of Riverside Community College's full-time counselors were exposed to the web site and the process for online counseling during a staff meeting on February 10, 1999. During this meeting, observations of counselors using the site were made to increase the probability of identification of problems with navigation and use. This technique of "looking over the shoulder of the user" is a common and successful method of evaluation used in the design and evaluation of computer software (Vertelney, 1995). At the end of this meeting the counselors were asked to further explore the web-based counseling support site and online counseling process on an individual basis and respond to a survey. This survey was developed by the online counseling committee in conjunction with Riverside Community College's office of institutional research (See Appendix A). This survey was distributed at the meeting and was subsequently sent to each counselor as an attachment to a reminder email.

A printed survey was chosen over an online survey for this phase of the evaluation because it was determined that a printed survey would allow the counselors to respond to questions while viewing the site. The survey asked the counselors to identify strengths and weaknesses of the site and solicited recommendations for improvements in navigation, ease of use and content of the site. Counselors were also asked to validate the information presented through this site and ascertain that it met the goal of providing necessary support to students in a reliable manner which was comparable to the support the student could get through traditional counseling methods. To aid in survey response return rate, the dean of counseling sent a reminder memo to all counselors on February 22, 1999 (See Appendix D).

The survey responses from the counselors in February, 1999, were used to modify the site prior to student use during phase three of this study, with their suggestions presented as a part of the findings. This use of the findings of the counselor's surveys is an essential component of improvement-oriented evaluations according to Patton (1997, p. 70) and is referred to by him as "instrumental use of the results" which he says "occurs when a decision or action follows from the evaluation." Patton states that the decisions supported by improvement-oriented evaluation "tend to be made in small, incremental steps based on specific evaluation findings aimed purposefully at instrumental use" (p. 79)—which is exactly the intent of this phase of the formative evaluation.

Phase III

Phase three of the evaluation was a pilot project with a small group of students who were enrolled in Riverside Community College's three online courses during the Spring, 1999 semester. During the first week of April, 1999, these students (N = 102) were contacted via email and invited to make an appointment to meet with a counselor online. The email (See Appendix E) directed the students to the online counseling web page, which was located at: http://www.academic.rccd.cc.ca.us/academic/counseling/cnslingonline.htm, from which they were able to submit a request for an online counseling appointment. Upon receipt of this electronic request, Riverside Community College replied, again via email (See Appendix F) to the student within one working day, offering an available appointment. The students were asked to send an email reply confirming the acceptance of this appointment within 24 hours. Upon receipt of this confirmation email, Riverside Community College sent the student directions to and a password for access to the WebCT online counseling environment (See Appendix G). At the appointed time the counselor and student met in the assigned counseling room and the counseling session was conducted.

After the online counseling appointment, students were asked to respond to an electronic survey, which was developed by the online counseling committee in conjunction with Riverside Community College's office of institutional research. A printed copy of this electronic survey, which shows the general text questions, can be found in Appendix B. Appendix H shows the survey as it appeared online. This survey asked students to indicate levels of satisfaction with this method of receiving counseling services, to identify strengths and weaknesses of the online counseling process, and to make recommendations for improvements to this process. As in Phases I and II, this phase was formative in nature, with the goal of improvement of the site prior to full implementation. Phase III was patterned after Patton's (1997) "implementation evaluation" which he describes as an evaluation which "focuses on finding out if the program has all its parts, if the parts are functional, and if the program is operating as it's supposed to be operating"(p. 196).

The students enrolled in the online courses were chosen as participants in this study because

- They had access to online services,
- They were knowledgeable about using the online environment, and familiar with the specific communication tools used for online counseling through WebCT, and because

- Citrus Community College, which offers tutorial services online, has found that the students who are enrolled in online courses are the most likely to seek tutorial services online.

Protection of Human Subjects

There was minimal risk to any human subjects involved in this study. All participation was voluntary and there were no negative consequences to those counselors or students who chose not to be a part of this study. To provide informed consent to the participants, an initial email request (See Appendix E) was sent to students inviting them to participate in this pilot project. The students were informed that they would be asked to complete a survey after participating in the online counseling appointment, and that results of this survey would be used to make improvements to Riverside Community College's online counseling process prior to full implementation of this service. The students were also informed that, although confidentiality of participants would be respected, composite results of the study would be published in this dissertation, and in the restricted environment of Riverside Community College's Open Campus and would thus be available to them after September, 1999.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was used in concert with qualitative data to analyze the overall success of the project. While the online system was being designed and developed, data which resulted from the counselor surveys was used to modify the site prior to the pilot project of Phase III. The data from student surveys will be used to modify the site and online counseling process prior to full implementation of online counseling services at Riverside Community College. Individual concerns and suggestions for improvement were discussed and implemented when deemed necessary by the online counseling committee. Descriptive analysis of each survey item for Phases II and III are presented in Chapter 4.

For each of the research questions, the source of data and method of analysis is described in Table 1.

Table 1

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question	Source of Data	Method of Analysis
Phase II:		
What are the perceptions of counselors with regard to the ease of navigation and use of the web-based counseling site?	18 Full-time Counselors	Observation, Frequency Distribution
Are counselors satisfied with the content included on the web-based counseling site?	18 Full-time Counselors	Frequency Distribution
Do counselors have any specific concerns or suggestions for improvement of the site that should be addressed in the formative evaluation process?	18 Full-time Counselors	Frequency Distribution
Are counselors satisfied with the counseling services rendered via the web-based counseling site?	18 Full-time Counselors	Frequency Distribution, Content Analysis
Phase III:		
Will students who use the online environment to take courses also use this method to access counseling services?	102 On-line Students	Frequency Distribution
What are the perceptions of online students with regard to the ease of navigation and use of the online counseling services?	102 On-line Students	Frequency Distribution
Do online students have any specific concerns or suggestions for improvement of the process that should be addressed?	102 On-line Students	Content Analysis
What online counseling services will the online students desire?	102 On-line Students	Frequency Distribution
Are online students satisfied with the online delivery method for counseling services?	102 On-line Students	Frequency Distribution, Content Analysis

Chapter IV

Results and Implications

The purpose of this study was to design, develop and evaluate a web-based counseling support site, which included access to online counseling appointments, for Riverside Community college's online students. Prior to this study, Riverside Community College had established a very limited web presence, which included the following brief reference to counseling services:

> Welcome to the RCCD Counseling Home Page! If you are thinking about attending RCC, the first step is to complete an application and return it to the admissions and records office. Once your application is on file, the best way to learn about the college and to get all the information you need is to enroll in *Guidance 45, Introduction College*. This course is eighteen hours and is taught by a counselor who can assist you in developing your education plan. (Retrieved February, 1999, http://rccd.cc.ca.us/)

The Riverside Community College counseling department had no input into the choice of information or the presentation of the information that was included on these original web pages. A printed version of these original pages can be found in Appendix I.

As a result of this study, through a process which included solicitation of input from all of the members of the Riverside Community College counseling department, a total of 57 web pages were developed, evaluated and published on the web (http://rccd.cc.ca.us/). In addition, a process for offering online counseling services to Riverside Community College's online students was developed, test-piloted and evaluated by a select group of students. This study was divided into three distinct phases with most of the design and development of the web pages and the online counseling service occurring during Phase I. Phase II was devoted to counselors' use and evaluation of the web-based counseling support site, including online counseling services. Finally, during Phase III, Riverside Community College's online students were invited to participate in a pilot study to evaluate online counseling services. To aid the reader in appreciating the implications of this study, results with implications are discussed for each distinct phase.

Phase I

Results

During this phase of the project, a web-based counseling support site and a process for offering online counseling at Riverside Community College were designed, developed and evaluated by the online counseling committee. This committee was comprised of the dean of counseling, four counselors and a member of the counseling support staff. As stated in Chapter 3, the form of evaluation used during Phase I of this study was developmental evaluation. Developmental evaluation is described by Patton (1997) as a type of evaluation in which "the evaluator becomes part of the design team helping to shape what's happening…in an evolving, rapidly changing environment of constant interaction, feedback, and change" (p.106). The online counseling committee participated in the selection of content to be included on the site and then evaluated the many iterations of pages for the web-based counseling support site. Various problems emerged which required revision, including issues with navigation, presentation and content. At the conclusion of this Phase I of this study, Riverside Community Colleges' student services presence on the web had increased from a mere two paragraphs of information (Appendix I) to 57 web pages, rich with a) information, such as career and transfer information, guidance course descriptions and scheduling information, matriculation services; b) links to other important information such as transfer institutions, financial services, and scholarship information; and c) interactive access to online counseling services. For printed examples of these pages, please see Appendix J.

Although the evaluation during this phase of the study was developmental, it was informal and was a part of the online counseling committee's professional activities. After the initial development of the web-pages, the members of the committee used the site, printed out the pages, and noted on the printed web-pages any problems with navigation, design or content. All suggested revisions were then submitted to the chairperson of this committee (this writer). Changes that were obvious improvements to the pages were immediately implemented and those which were not implemented, were documented for a discussion by the committee at a subsequent meeting. This cycle of individuals within the committee reviewing the web-pages, suggesting changes, meeting to discuss conflicting or unclear suggestions, and then revising the web-pages, was conducted five times during the Winter of 1998-99. Phase I concluded with the determination by the online counseling committee that the web pages and the process for online counseling were both ready for evaluation by the rest of the counseling department. The new site was ready for presentation in February, 1999.

Implications

The iterative process of review, revision, and implementation, which was used during Phase I of this study, demonstrated that the development of web pages is an ongoing process which requires input from content experts to insure accuracy of the information presented. During this phase, the online counseling committee continually received valuable feedback not only from the counseling faculty, but also from the classified support staff from the various service areas represented in the web pages.

Because these are the people who deal with student requests for information on a daily basis, their suggestions for improvements to the site had an enormous impact on its final iteration. It must also be noted that, during this phase, the online counseling committee discovered the importance of including both proficient users of technology as well as those who are intimidated by its use. Valuable suggestions for improvements were often received from those who were the least proficient in the use of technology and their lack of technology literacy often allowed the committee to observe when the web pages were confusing rather than intuitive.

A secondary implication of the results of this phase of this study was that implementation of revisions to a web-site often demonstrate a need for further revisions. Many times during Phase I of this study, when the online counseling committee reviewed revisions to the site that the web-developer had made as per their request, they became aware of further changes that their original revisions necessitated.

A final implication of the results of this phase of the study was that web-development requires the ability to see pages in a "live" format. Even after the online counseling committee felt that the site was ready for publication based on revisions they had made to printed copies of pages, when the product was viewed on the web, the need for further revision was discovered. The online counseling committee found that the best way to discover problems with navigation, flow of information and presentation of content, was to view the pages in the same format as the end-user would eventually view them.

Phase II

Results

The members of the counseling faculty were the sources of data during Phase II, and there were four specific research questions addressed during this phase. On the next several pages Figures 1-10 answer research questions 1-4.

On February 10, 1999, 16 of the 18 full-time counselors at Riverside Community College attended a workshop to view the new web-based counseling support site and process for online counseling, which had been designed and developed during Phase I of this study. During this workshop, the online counseling committee circulated throughout the room observing the counselors' attempts to navigate and use the web-site. According to Vertelney (1995) this is a successful method of discovering user problems with computer software. The use of the web-based counseling support site was determined to be intuitive and no problems with navigation between pages were noted during this workshop. However, there was one issue that caused confusion amongst some of the counselors. It was difficult for them to understand why some of the links to other Riverside Community College information were "not working". Although the reason for this—that they were being asked to evaluate *only* the new counseling site, which was not yet connected to other Riverside Community College information—was explained repeatedly, there was still some confusion. Members of the online counseling committee had to continually explain this concept to individual counselors. However, the online counseling committee determined that this was a positive issue because one of the goals in the design of the site was to have it be congruent with other Riverside Community College web-pages. At the conclusion of this two-hour workshop, the counselors were asked to peruse the site, experiment with the online counseling process, and then complete a written survey (See Appendix A) over the following two weeks.

Survey Responses from Counselors

Of the 16 counselors who attended the counseling workshop, 12 completed the written survey for a response rate of 75%. However, one survey response could not be used because the person did not follow the directions and no ratings were given. This brought the usable response rate to 69%. The survey was divided into two sections: (a) evaluation of the web-based counseling support site, and (b) evaluation of the online counseling/advising web-site. Responses to the survey items were analyzed using StatView (Abacus, 1996). Responses to each survey item are reported here.

Part A Items: Web-based Counseling Support Site. There were five specific criteria for evaluating the counseling support site. Figures 1-5 provide a graphic representation.

1. Ease of navigation. When asked to rate the ease of navigation of the site, 6 of the 11 respondents rated it *very good*, four rated it *good* and one rated it *excellent*. Figure 1 illustrates the breakdown of ratings of the ease of navigation of the web-site.

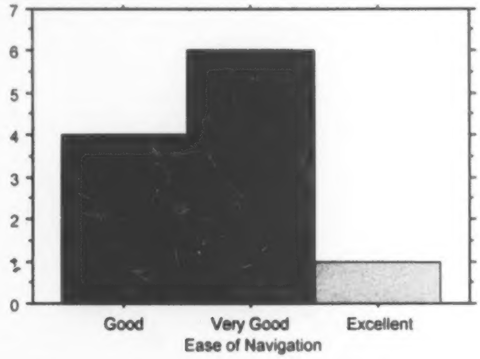

Figure 1. Histogram of ease of navigation of the web-based counseling support site (N=11)

2. Accuracy of information. When asked to rate the accuracy of information of the site, 6 of the 11 respondents rated it *very good*, four rated it *good* and one rated it *excellent*. Figure 2 illustrates the breakdown of ratings of the accuracy of information of the web-site.

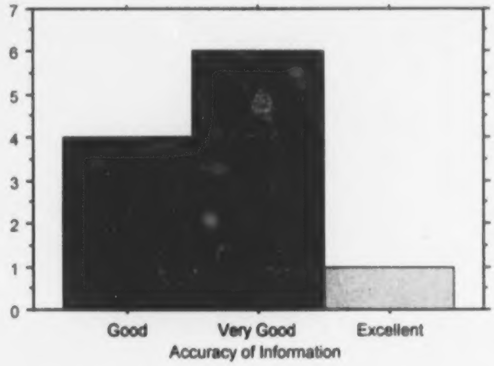

Figure 2. Histogram of accuracy of information of the web-based counseling support site (N=11)

3. Clarity of information. When asked to rate the clarity of information of the site, 5 of the 11 respondents rated it *very good*, four rated it *good*, one rated it *somewhat poor*, and one rated it *excellent*. Figure 3 illustrates the breakdown of ratings of the clarity of information of the web-site.

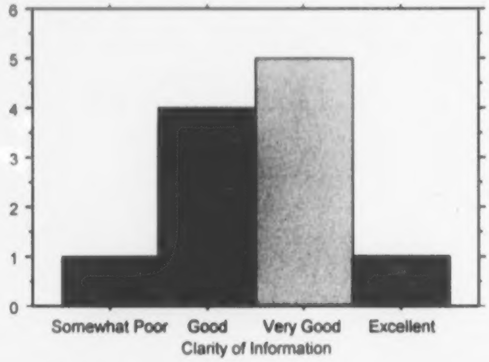

Figure 3. Histogram of clarity of information of the web-based counseling support site (N=11)

4. Scope of information. When asked to rate the scope of information of the site, 5 of the 11 respondents rated it *very good*, four rated it *good* and two rated it *excellent*. Figure 4 illustrates the breakdown of ratings of the scope of information of the web-site.

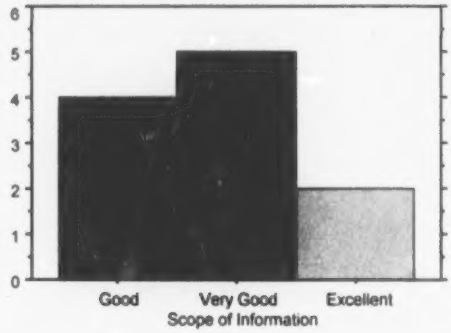

Figure 4. Histogram of scope of information of the web-based counseling support site (N=11)

5. Style of web-site. When asked to rate the style of the web-site, 6 of the 11 respondents rated it *very good*, three rated it *good*, one rated it *somewhat poor*, and one rated it *excellent*. Figure 5 illustrates the breakdown of ratings of the style of the web-site.

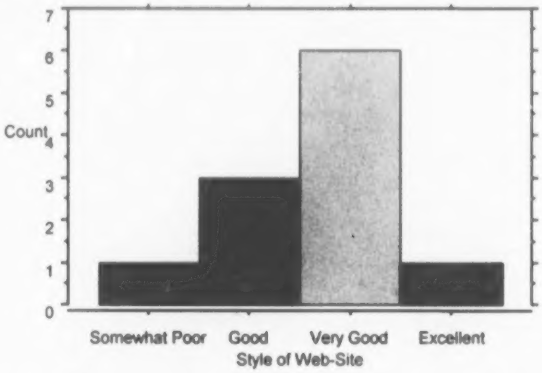

Figure 5. Histogram of style of the web-based counseling support web-site (N=11)

Part B Items: Online Counseling / Advising Web-site. The same five criteria were used to evaluate the advising portion of the website. Results are graphically presented in Figures 6-10.

1. Ease of navigation. When asked to rate the ease of navigation of the site, 5 of the 11 respondents rated it very good, four rated it good and two rated it excellent. Figure 6 illustrates the breakdown of ratings of the ease of navigation of the web-site.

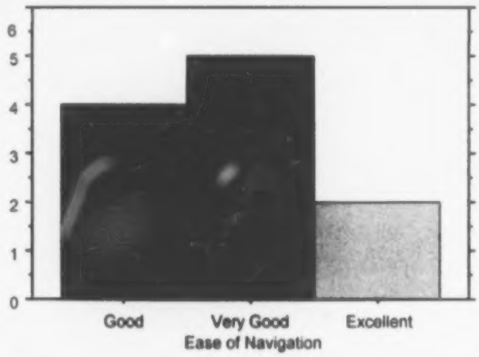

Figure 6. Histogram of ease of navigation of the online counseling web-site (N=11)

2. Accuracy of information. When asked to rate the accuracy of information of the site, 7 of the 11 respondents rated it *very good*, and four rated it *good*. Figure 7 illustrates the breakdown of ratings of the accuracy of information of the web-site.

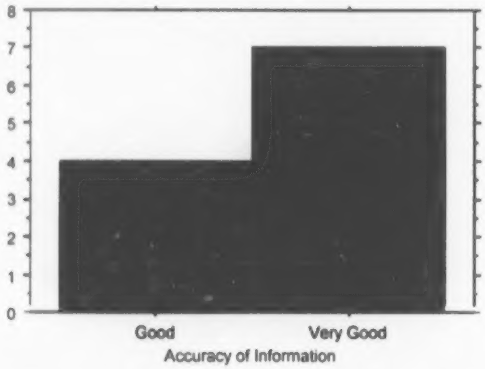

Figure 7. Histogram of accuracy of information of the online counseling web-site (N=11)

3. Clarity of information. When asked to rate the clarity of information of the site, 6 of the 11 respondents rated it *very good*, three rated it *good*, one rated it *somewhat poor*, and one rated it *excellent*. Figure 8 illustrates the breakdown of ratings of the clarity of information of the web-site.

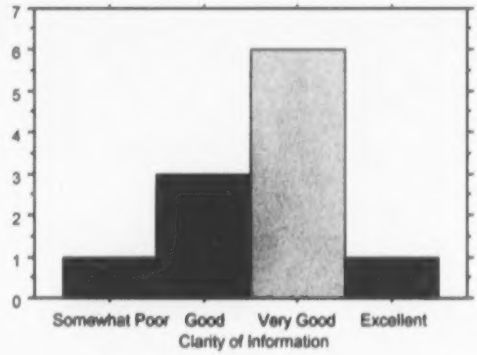

Figure 8. Histogram of clarity of information of the online counseling web-site (N=11)

4. Scope of information. When asked to rate the scope of information of the site, 5 of the 11 respondents rated it *very good*, five rated it *good* and one rated it *excellent*. Figure 9 illustrates the breakdown of ratings of the scope of information of the web-site.

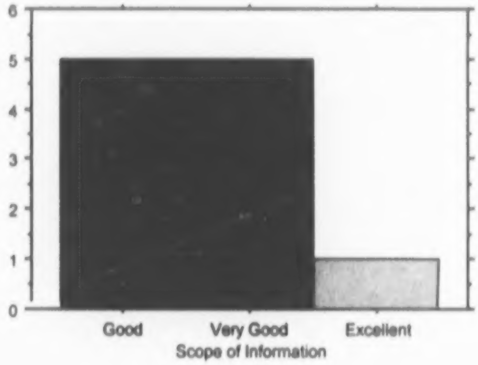

Figure 9. Histogram of scope of information of the online counseling web-site (N=11)

5. Style of web-site. When asked to rate the style of the web-site, 5 of the 11 respondents rated it *very good*, four rated it *good*, one rated it *somewhat poor*, and one rated it *excellent*. Figure 10 illustrates the breakdown of ratings of the style of the web-site.

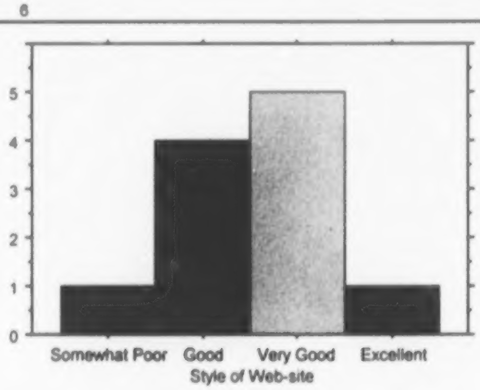

Figure 10. Histogram of style of the online counseling web-site (N=11)

In addition to the rating the above five criteria for both the counseling support site and the online counseling/advising site, counselors were asked to supplement these ratings with suggestions for improvements to the specific web pages. Only two counselors provided additional suggestions for improvements to the site

Implications

As stated in Chapter 3, the form of evaluation used during Phase II of this study was formative in nature, with the goal of improvement of the web-based counseling support site and the online counseling support site prior to implementation with a group of online students during Phase III. To this end, revisions were made to the web-pages based on counselor responses to the written survey (See Appendix A). Those criteria which received any ratings that were less than "good" were revised based on the suggestions from the counselors and the online counseling committee. Those criteria that were rated “good” were also revised in an effort to move the “good” responses to either “very good” or “excellent.”

As demonstrated in Figures 3, 5, 8 and 10, one counselor indicated that both the “clarity of information” and “style of the web-sites” were “somewhat poor”. Since this counselor had also written comments such as “some phone numbers are wrong” and “format is not consistent from page to page,” these comments led to specific suggestions for improvements from the online counseling committee to the web-developer. Although all “good” responses were also examined for suggestions for improvements, most of the counselors either did not add narrative comments, or added general comments such as “continue to add to” or “check all grammar and spelling.” These ratings and comments helped focus the subsequent discussions of the online counseling committee and resulted in more revisions to the web-pages.

Although Phase II did not include a formal effort to collect additional data to determine the success of the efforts to improve the site, members of the online counseling committee interacted informally with the other members of the counseling department to solicit feedback on the revisions. Final revisions were made to the counseling support site and the online counseling/advising site by May, 1999, in preparation for the Phase III pilot project and eventual publication on the web for Riverside Community College’s general student population by the Fall of 1999.

Phase III

Results and Implications

The Spring, 1999 online students were the sources of data during Phase III, and there were five specific research questions addressed during this phase. On the next several pages Figures 11-15 answer research questions 5-9.

During April, 1999, a total of 102 students, who had enrolled in three initial online courses at Riverside Community College, were contacted by both email and regular mail and were invited to participate in Phase III of this study. These written communications encouraged the students to make an online counseling appointment and then complete an online survey after the scheduled appointment. This online survey served as the formative evaluation tool for this phase of the study. As Patton (1997) states, "Formative evaluation typically connotes collecting data for a specific period of time, usually during the start-up or pilot phase of a project, to improve implementation, solve unanticipated problems, and make sure that participants are progressing toward desired outcomes" (p. 69).

Forty of the 102 students dropped their online courses prior to the first census report deadline revising the total number of students who were actually enrolled in these three courses to 62. (It must be noted that even though this 39% may seem to be a high drop rate, it is not unusual for community college students to drop classes (Austin, 1975; Tinto, 1987). The State of California's average drop rate is 19% [Office of Institutional Research, 1997, p. II.3] and that number is taken from students who drop *after* the first census.) Thirty of the 62 enrolled students (48%) requested an online counseling appointment, while 2 of the 40 students (5%) who had dropped their online course also requested an appointment. Of the 32 students who requested an appointment, 19 (59%) actually attended their scheduled appointments, which included a student who had dropped his online course. Figure 11 illustrates the breakdown of the students who were invited to participate, scheduled an online counseling appointment, actually participated in the appointment and completed the online survey after the appointment.

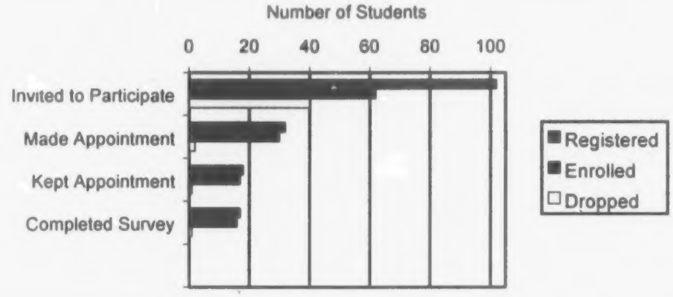

Figure 11. Histogram of Phase III subjects (N=102)

Survey Responses from Students

Of the 32 students who made counseling appointments, 19 kept their appointments, with 17 completing the online survey after the appointment. A copy of this survey, as it appeared online, can be found in Appendix H. The responses to the survey items were analyzed using StatView (Abacus, 1996). Responses to each survey item are reported below with graphic representation in Figures 12 to 22.

Quantitative data results. Nine survey items asked students to evaluate various aspects of their online counseling experience either by responding to "yes/no" questions or rating specific aspects of their experience according to the supplied scale. Responses to these nine items resulted in quantitative data, which is reported below. A graphic representation of items 1 to 7 is presented in Figure 12.

1. *Was the invitation to participate in online counseling easy to understand?* All 17 of the respondents indicated that the invitation to participate in online counseling was easy to understand.
2. *Did RCC respond to your counseling request in a timely manner?* Of the 17 respondents, 16 indicated that RCC did respond to the request for online counseling in a timely manner.
3. *Were the directions for making an appointment easy to understand?* Of the 17 respondents, 16 indicated that the directions for making an appointment were easy to understand.
4. *Was your appointment time convenient for you?* Of the 17 respondents, 16 indicated that the appointment time was convenient for them.
5. *Did the RCC staff confirm the appointment time within 24 hours?* Of the 17 respondents, 16 indicated that the RCC staff did confirm the appointment time within 24 hours.
6. Would you recommend this method of counseling to a friend? Of the 17 respondents, 15 indicated that they would recommend this method of counseling to a friend and one student did not respond to this item.
7. *How many minutes were you kept waiting for your appointment?* Of the 17 respondents, 16 indicated that they were not kept waiting at all for their appointments, with only one responding that the wait was under five minutes.

A graphic representation of the percentage of students reporting agreement with items 1 to 7 is presented in Figure 12.

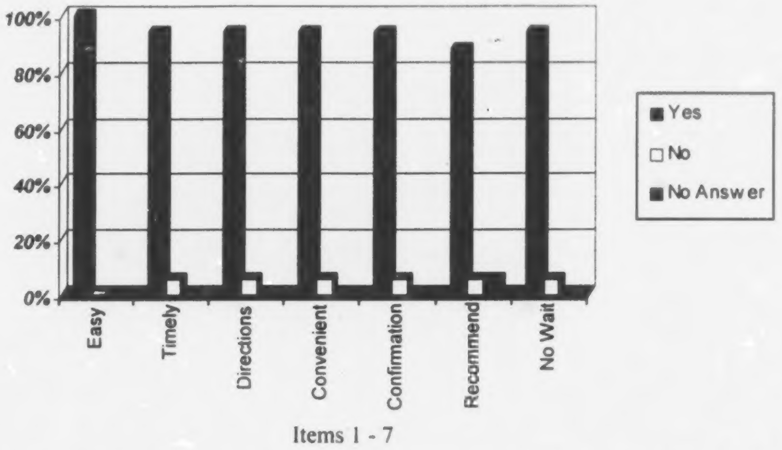

Figure 12. Percentage of students reporting agreement with items 1 to 7 (N=17)

8. Overall, how would you rate the quality of this site? Eight of the respondents rated the quality of this site very good, seven rated it good, and two indicated that the quality of the site was adequate. Figure 13 illustrates the breakdown of ratings of the quality of the site.

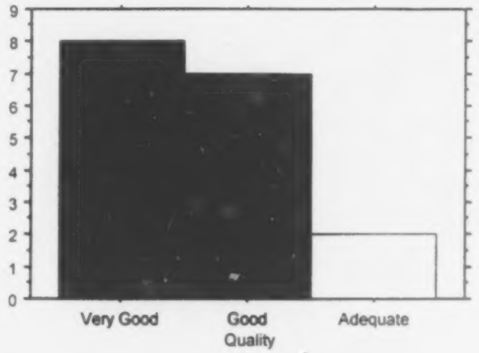

Figure 13. Histogram of quality of site (N=17)

9. *Compared to in-person counseling, I think online counseling is...* Of the 11 participants who responded to this item, 10 indicated that online counseling was either equal in quality (7) or much better (3), while only one responded that it was

worse. Six students did not respond to this item. Figure 14 illustrates the breakdown of the comparison of in-person counseling to online counseling.

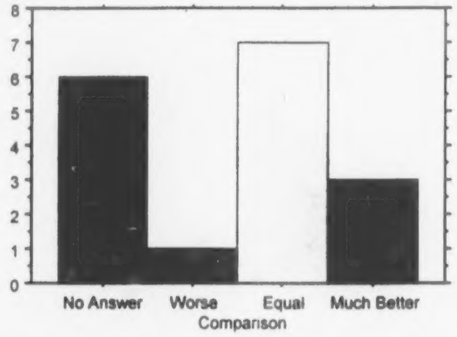

Figure 14. Histogram of comparison of in-person counseling to online counseling (N=11)

Quantitative data implications. As Figures 12, 13 and 14 demonstrate, responses to the above items were overwhelmingly positive. Responses to items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7, which asked the students to evaluate various components of the process for receiving online counseling, revealed that 94% of the students were satisfied with each of the components included in the survey. It is interesting to note that, although one student responded negatively to each item, the same student did not respond negatively to more than one item. This fact, coupled with the fact that 15 of the 17 students (88%) indicated that they would recommend this method of counseling to a friend, indicate that students who responded to this survey were satisfied with the process for online counseling at Riverside Community College. Responses to item 8 also indicated that students who participated in this study were satisfied with the quality of the site itself.

Item 9 asked the students to compare in-person to online counseling. 91% of the students who answered this question indicated that online counseling was either "equal in quality" or "much better" than in-person counseling. However, 6 of the 17 respondents did not answer this question. It is surmised that students may not have responded because they were given directions to respond only if they had experience with both in-person and online counseling at Riverside Community College.

Qualitative data results and implications. In addition to the above items, two open-ended items were included on the survey which resulted in qualitative data. Content analysis of the responses to these two items revealed the following findings.

1. *Please add any additional comments about the online counseling experience.*

   Fourteen of the participants provided 25 responses which were then placed into one of six categories.

   A. Value of the service
   B. Convenience of the service
   C. Difficulty of communication via this method of counseling
   D. Problems with the technology
   E. Suggestions for improvements, and
   F. Thanks.

   For a complete listing of the responses, please see Appendix K. Figure 15 illustrates a percentage breakdown of the 25 comments about the online counseling experience according to categories.

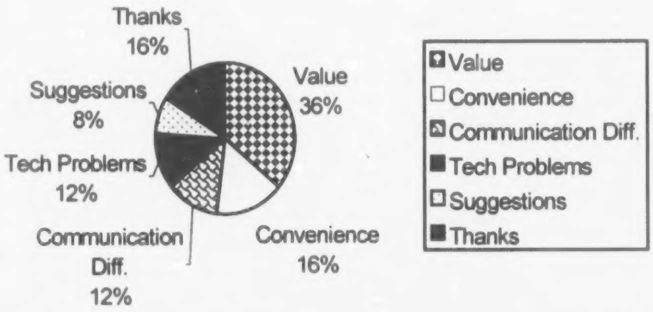

Figure 15. Pie chart illustrating the percentage breakdown of the 25 comments about the online counseling experience (N=25)

The topic that online counseling was a "valuable service" appeared most often, it was mentioned by nine of the 14 students who responded to this item. The actual responses which were coded in this topic included comments such as, "It is very good that this service will be available," "It was Great!" and "RCC is keeping up with the constant change of technology, Great Job!" It must also be noted that one of the students who participated in this pilot project was an agoraphobic who had never been able to see a counselor until this service became available. She said:

> Online counseling has help me out a lot..I have a disability where I'm not able to get to the campus for counseling, this was easier on me and very helpful for me..thank you for having online counseling and have me be involved it in the pilot program of it ;-)

There were two topics that appeared in four responses. The first of these topics was "convenience of the service." Items coded in this category included such responses as, "This was very convenient for me," "I have a disability where I'm not able to get the campus for counseling, this was easier on me," and "The convenience is a strong selling point." The second topic, which appeared in four responses, was a thank-you from the students for offering this service.

Two topics—difficulty of communication and problems with the technology—were mentioned by three of the respondents. All three of the students who mentioned having a problem with the technology actually had the same problem. The URL that was sent to them for logging on to the site was too long and was being cut off by their email program. The problem was corrected by the end of the first week of the pilot, and students no longer complained about having problems with the technology.

Two respondents actually made suggestions for improvements in their responses to this item. One suggestion was that "it would be helpful if the students were given an idea of their unofficial transcript to see where they stand." The other suggestion was that "RCC open an email account for general questions so that students do not have to make appointments to see a counselor". The first suggestion is one that RCC is exploring as it attempts to allow students access to their own academic records online, but it is not yet possible at this institution. However, the second suggestion is already in place. RCC has actually had a link from its home page for students to email questions to the counseling department for over two years now (personal communication, Dr. Nishime, May 20, 1999).

2. *Please make suggestions for improvement to the online counseling process.* Eleven of the subjects responded to this item, but two of these responses were statements that the student had no suggestions for improvement. The remaining nine responses included 17 suggestions which varied in content. For a complete listing of the responses, please see Appendix L.

The most common suggestion for improvement dealt with the problem of the URL, which, as stated earlier was corrected after the first three days of counseling. The only other suggestion for improvement that was made by more than one student was that RCC "create a web-site where people can get more information." Since these students were invited to participate in this study and thus did not enter the site through the information pages, which had already been developed, they were unaware of their existence.

The remaining suggestions for improvement to the online counseling process were singular responses which included, "I'm wondering if 30 minutes is too much time," "Just working at getting the information back to the person quicker. I kept thinking no one got my message," and "More times offered." In addition, one respondent said, "Thank you for this experience. I thoroughly enjoyed it!"

Optional item results. Seven questions were added to the survey for the purpose of gathering information about Riverside Community Colleges' online students which were prefaced with the following statement: "The following questions are optional and will be used only to collect baseline data about our online students." Some of the students chose not to answer one or more of these questions. Responses to these survey item are reported below with graphic representation in Figures 16 to 22.

1. *Where were you when you kept your on-line appointment?* Of the 17 respondents, 15 indicated that they were at home when they kept their online appointments, one indicated elsewhere, and one student did not respond to this item. Figure 16 illustrates the breakdown of places from which students kept their online counseling appointments.

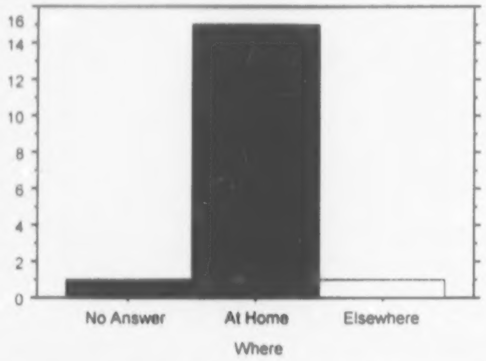

Figure 16. Histogram of place from which student kept online counseling appointment (N=16)

2. *What is your age group?* Eight of the respondents were between the ages of 30 and 39, three were between the ages of 40 and 49, three were between the ages of 22 and 29, two were less than 21 years old, and one was 50 or older. Figure 17 illustrates the breakdown of ages of respondents.

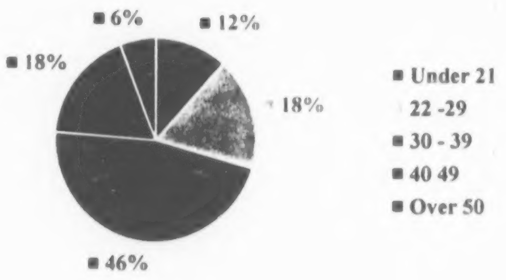

Figure 17. Pie chart illustrating the percentage breakdown of age of respondents (N=17)

3. *How many college units have you completed?* Ten of the respondents indicated that they had completed over 40 college units, four indicated that they had completed between 21 and 40 units, and three indicated that they had completed 20 units or less. Figure 18 illustrates the breakdown of college units completed by respondents.

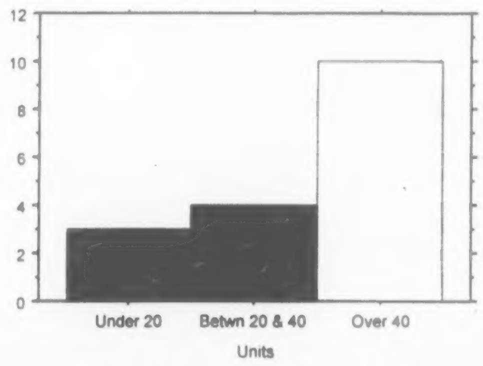

Figure 18. Histogram of breakdown of college units completed (N=17)

4. *What is the highest college degree you have earned?* Of the 17 the respondents, 14 indicated that they had not yet completed a college degree, two indicated that they had completed an associate's degree, and one a bachelor's degree. Figure 19 illustrates the breakdown of highest college degree earned by respondents.

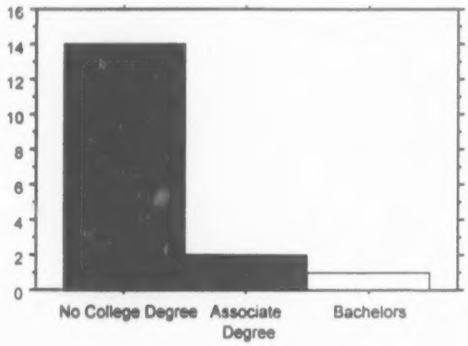

Figure 19. Histogram of breakdown of highest college degree earned (N=17)

5. *How many hours per week do you usually work outside the home?* Seven of the respondents indicated that they usually worked 21 to 40 hours per week outside the home, four indicated that they worked more than 40, and two indicated 20 hours or less. The remaining four respondents indicated that they did not work outside the home. Figure 20 illustrates the breakdown of hours worked per week by respondents.

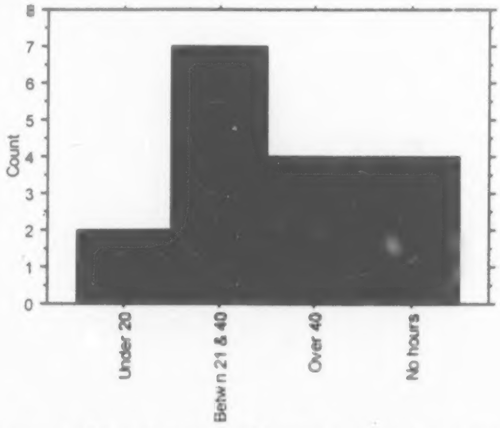

Figure 20. Histogram of breakdown of hours worked per week (N=17)

6. *What time of day do you usually work outside the home?* Five of the respondents indicated that they worked during more than one time of day during the week, three indicated mornings only, three indicated afternoons only, two indicated evenings only and one respondent worked only in the late night hours. Figure 21 illustrates the breakdown of time of day worked by respondents.

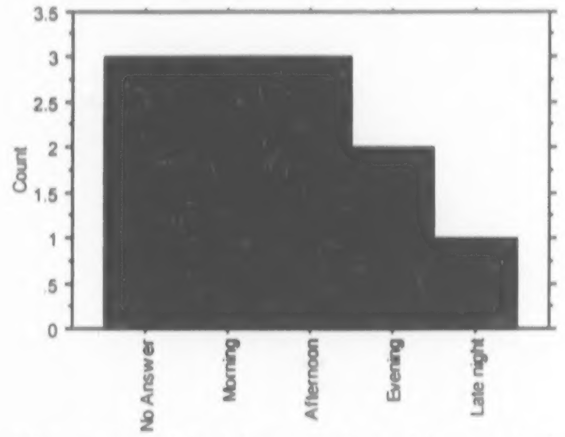

Figure 21. Histogram of breakdown of time of day worked (N=17)

7. *What is your total household yearly income?* Four of the respondents indicated a total household income of $20,000 to $50,000, three indicated between $50,001 to $75,000, three indicated between $75,001 to $100,000, two under $20,000, and two over $100,000. Three respondents chose not to answer this question. Figure 22 illustrates the breakdown of household yearly income of respondents.

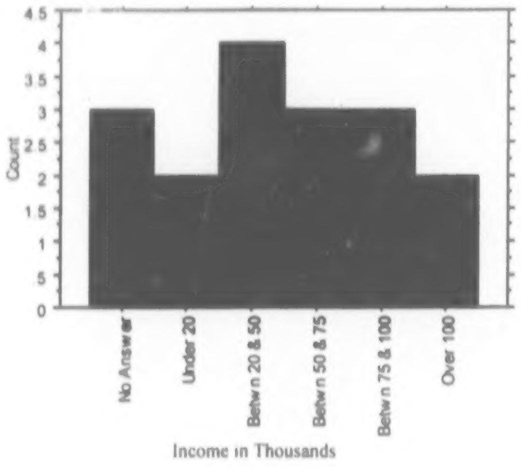

Figure 22. Histogram of household yearly income of respondents (N=14)

Optional item implications. Spring of 1999 was the first semester that online courses were offered at the Riverside Community College. The descriptive data collected through the seven optional items described above provides the college with baseline data about the students who comprised the online student population during the Spring of 1999.

Summary of Findings

During Phases I of this project, a web-based counseling support site, which included a process for offering Riverside Community College's online students an opportunity to meet with a counselor online, was designed, developed and evaluated. Members of the online counseling committee participated in the selection of content to be included on the site and decisions regarding presentation of this content. This was accomplished through an evaluative process, which included revisions to numerous iterations of the site and resulted in the final iteration that was presented to the department on February 10, 1999. The second phase of this study was formative in nature, with the goal of improvement of the site and online counseling process prior to implementation with a group of online students. Riverside Community College's full-time counseling staff members responded favorably to survey items about web-based counseling support services. Based on the suggestions from the members of the counseling department during Phase II, final revisions were made to the site and online counseling process in preparation for publication on the web for Riverside Community College's general student population in the Fall of 1999.

Phase III, an implementation pilot project, was then conducted to solicit student evaluation of the online counseling process and experience. This phase was patterned after Patton's (1997) "implementation evaluation" which he describes as an evaluation which "focuses on finding out if the program has all its parts, if the parts are functional, and if the program is operating as it's supposed to be operating"(p. 196). Although the results of this survey can not be inferred to the larger student population, they do demonstrate that the students who were enrolled in online courses at Riverside Community College in the Spring of 1999 and who participated in an online counseling appointment, rated online counseling as a positive experience.

An overwhelming majority of those who completed the survey indicated that the communications from the college were easy to understand and timely, and that they found the quality of the site to be above average. In addition, 15 of the 16 respondents (94%) indicated that they would recommend this method of counseling to a friend. Finally, of the 11 participants who responded to the item asking them to compare online counseling to in-person counseling, 10 (91%) indicated that it was either equal in quality or much better, while only one responded that it was worse. Analysis of the responses to the two open-ended items on the survey also indicated that the participants in this study felt that online counseling was a valuable service. Although some students stated that they were frustrated with technical problems of getting into the site, once those problems were solved, no other technical problems were mentioned. Five of the responses to the open-ended items actually included thank-you's to the department for offering this service and "keeping up with the constant change of technology." These responses reveal receptiveness to the online environment as a medium for the delivery of student services.

As a result of findings during Phase III, final revisions will be made to the online counseling process prior to full implementation of online counseling services for Riverside Community College's general student population in the Fall of 1999. Conclusions, recommendations and limitations are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter V

Conclusions, Recommendations and Limitations

As two trends converge on the California Community Colleges: (a) the rapid growth of the 'new majority' of non-traditional, at risk college student population (Martens et al., 1995; Nussbaum, 1998; Patrick, Furlow & Donovan, 1988), and (b) the increase in distance education opportunities (Ball, 1994; Bole, 1998; Dede, 1991; Douvanis, 1997; Picard, 1996), student services departments are striving to find ways to meet the needs of this population of students in the new technological environment (Martens, et al., 1995). This study explored the option of offering web-based counseling support services as a possible solution to this problem for Riverside Community College's online students, in preparation for offering these services to the general student population in the future. This chapter presents conclusions, recommendations, and limitations of the study.

Conclusions

Analysis of the results of this study led to the following five conclusions:

1. The Riverside Community College counseling faculty needs further staff development prior to full implementation of online counseling services for the general student population.

2. The Internet provides a viable avenue for the delivery of student services to community college students and this vehicle should continue to be explored in the future.

3. The collaborative process used in this study demonstrated that the involvement of all stakeholders in the development of web-based support services was a success.

4. In order for the implementation of online student services to be successful in the community colleges, technical support must be in place for faculty, students and staff.

5. The constantly changing nature of the Internet requires that evaluation of web-based support services be an ongoing process.

The above conclusions led to recommendations specifically for Riverside Community College as well as general recommendations for other community colleges planning to implement online student services. The recommendations, which resulted from each conclusion, are discussed in the following section.

Recommendations

Recommendations Based on Conclusion 1

Limit online counseling audience for 1999-2000 school year. Results of the pilot study conducted during Phase III suggest that it would be advantageous for Riverside Community College to limit its audience for online counseling services to its online students for the 1999-2000 school year for the following reasons:

- Counselors will require training with this new technology. Limiting the audience gives the counseling department more control over the number of counselors needed to provide the service and thus an opportunity to provide adequate training for these counselors.

- Riverside Community College must plan for staffing for both the support staff and the counselors necessary to respond to the requests for online counseling. Limiting the audience to online students for one year will give RCC an opportunity to increase its audience while maintaining boundaries in order to determine resources needed and adequately plan for staffing.

- The students who participated in the pilot study were technology literate and already familiar with the Web-CT environment. Yet even with this group, some technical problems were experienced. Another year with a limited, yet larger group of students will allow Riverside Community College to resolve these technical problems prior to opening online counseling services to students who might not be as experienced with the use of technology.

- Riverside Community College is increasing its online course sections from 3 to 14 in the Fall 1999 semester and the Spring 2000 semester will have at least that many sections. Therefore, even with this limited audience, the target population for online counseling will grow from 60 to approximately 700 students.

Increase Online Counseling Audience During Spring 2000. When the above issues are resolved, it is further recommended that RCC increase its audience to include all students who are enrolled in telecourses in the Spring 2000 semester.

Continue Staff Development. It is the belief of this author that the problem of adequate staff development for counseling faculty will be an issue with which most institutions of higher education will have to deal as they begin to offer student services in the online environment. Prior planning to insure that counseling faculty members are proficient users of the necessary technologies will help insure success of the implementation of this new medium in the delivery of student services.

Recommendations Based on Conclusion 2

Continue to explore the Iternet as a vehicle to deliver student services. Students and faculty who participated in this study at Riverside Community College, agree that the Internet provides great possibilities for the delivery of student services, including online counseling. Although the results of this study can not be generalized to the entire student population, the positive reception for online counseling indicates that Riverside Community College should move forward with its plans to offer online access to student services to its general student population. Other factors contributing to this recommendation are the exponential increase in Internet use in the general population (Maddux, 1996, p. 64); and the fact that over 40% of Riverside Community College's incoming students indicate that they have Internet access from home or from work.

As new tools are developed and improved, such as computerized degree audit programs and document imaging systems, which will give students more access to their personal records online, the use of technology to deliver student services will only continue to expand for all colleges. Student services departments in the California Community Colleges can not afford to wait until these tools are fully developed before they begin to plan for their use. This recommendation is in agreement with Martens et al. who admonish that student affairs practitioners must provide the leadership necessary to help educational institutions respond to the changing needs of students. In fact Martens et al. state:

> How student affairs practitioners help their institutions identify and meet the challenges posed…may very well determine whether community colleges succeed or fail in the next century. (1995, p. 14)

Recommendations Based on Conclusion 3

Include stakeholders in the development of web-based student support services. The iterative process of review, revision, and implementation, which was used during Phase I of this study, demonstrated that the development of web pages is an ongoing process which requires input from users as well as experts. In agreement with Ancis (1998) and Carroll (1991), this study clearly demonstrated that counselors should be involved in all phases of the development of web-based student support services. The inclusion of counseling faculty serves a 3-fold purpose:

1. Counselors will serve as the expert panel to evaluate the content of the site itself, and
2. The range of familiarity with technology in the department will probably encompass all user groups and thus simulate future student users (feedback will be from all ability levels), and

3. Counselors will be key players in the implementation phase, which will most likely be much more successful if there is "buy-in" from them. This buy-in is more likely to occur if they were in on the development of the site, while if they were just informed of its availability after it was completed, they might feel that it was just another thing added to their job.

It is important to again note that some of the most helpful suggestions for improvements to Riverside Community College's online counseling services came from the counselors who were the least technology literate. One example of this occurred when the counseling department was discussing what actual services should be available to students in the online environment. Opinions ranged from offering the total range of on-campus services, to restricting online services to those that did not require access to student records. Even though the counselors who argued for limited services were the least comfortable with technology, valid points were made that led to the agreement that those students who were in danger of being dismissed from school, would not be able to see a counselor in the online environment. However, the department also agreed that this decision would be revisited as online tools advanced and enabled better communication between the counselor and the student. The continued solicitation of input from counselors whose technology skills encompass all levels of expertise will lead to good decisions about the appropriate use of technology in student services.

This study also demonstrated that the inclusion of students in the development of the web-based services is an important consideration. While students could not be expected to ascertain correctness of content, problems which were discovered during the student phase (Phase III) of this study, had not been noted during the preceding two phases of use by content experts.

Recommendations Based on Conclusion 4

Plan for adequate technology support personnel. One problem that surfaced during this study was the recognition that adequate support personnel was not in place at Riverside Community College to facilitate successful implementation of web-based student support services. This technology support is essential for faculty, staff and students involved in efforts to increase the use of technology in student services, and it requires that someone be designated to be responsible for the maintenance of the information to insure its currency and accuracy. It is the opinion of this writer that lack of adequate support personnel will be a problem that many colleges will have to face as they begin to offer online services to their students. *Planning from the inception of the idea* for this support personnel is essential to the success of the endeavor.

Recommendations Based on Conclusion 5

Continue formative evaluation of online counseling. It is also recommended that formative evaluation of the web-based student support services be continued at Riverside Community College during the 1999-2000 school year. This will allow Riverside Community College to determine if, as results from this study have indicated, full implementation in Fall of 2001 is a reasonable, achievable goal.

Because of the constantly changing nature of the Internet, it is recommended that any college implementing web-based student support services also plan for continuing formative evaluation of these services.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Results of this study indicate that future studies are warranted. Because of the findings of this study—namely the positive reception from both counseling faculty and online students to web-based student support services—Riverside Community College will most likely implement online counseling for its general student population in the Fall, 2000 semester. After the initial problems, which occur with any new implementation, are discovered and resolved, an evaluative study will need to be conducted to determine the effectiveness of online counseling when compared to in-person counseling at Riverside Community College.

As online counseling and advising becomes more and more available in higher education, it will also be necessary to conduct studies to determine the skills necessary for offering counseling services via this medium. For example, when online counseling was discussed at a counseling meeting after the pilot project concluded, the most enthusiastic comments about the online counseling experience seemed to come from those counselors who were most comfortable with technology, and who had adequate keyboarding skills to "talk" online. Are these skills necessary for quality counseling/advising to occur online? What other skills and abilities will contribute to successful online counseling/advising sessions?

Limitations

As stated previously, due to the fact that students and counselors who participated in this study were from one community college, and students themselves were a very small segment of the general population of that college, generalizability of the findings from this study is limited.

A second limitation of this study that must be noted was the fact that the counselors involved in this study had varying levels of technology expertise. While the advantages of involving all stakeholders were noted in the discussion of the design and development phases of this study, these varying levels of expertise may have had a negative impact on the number of students who were able to access the online counseling services during Phase III. It seems obvious that implementation of new technologies will engender problems. When this happens, people who are comfortable with the technology itself may be able to help solve these problems.

One example of this occurred during Phase III, the pilot project, of this study. The first counselor who conducted the online counseling had only 1 out of 6 students show up for his appointments. The counselor did nothing except wait for the next student to arrive. The next day, the counselor who was seeing students online immediately emailed the first student who did not show and asked, "are you having trouble getting into the site for your appointment?" The student replied that she was having trouble, and the counselor was able to help the student get in and subsequently help determine that the problem was the length of the URL. The problem was corrected, and from then on, no students complained of having problems getting in to the site. Thus, it is the opinion of this writer that, while it is imperative to solicit as much involvement as possible, counselors who participate must have the skills necessary to conduct an online counseling session successfully.

Closing Comments

The California Community Colleges are facing a daunting task of educating an increasingly diverse, rapidly growing non-traditional, and often at-risk student population (Martens, et al., 1995; Nussbaum, 1998; OIR, 1997; & Twigg, 1994). In addition, future demands on this same population of students require that they are familiar and comfortable with the use of technology in their work as well as personal lives. Finally, this use of technology in general (Maddux, 1996) and in higher education specifically

(Ball, 1994; Bole, 1998; Herbert, 1997; Mora-Lopez & Song, 1998; & Walling, 1996) is growing at an exponential rate.

What can student services departments in the California Community Colleges do to help prepare students to succeed in their futures at the same time they meet the needs of these students in their presents? The purpose of this study was to design, develop, implement and evaluate a web-based counseling support site, which included access to online counseling services, as a possible answer to this question for one of these community colleges. Results of this study demonstrate that, while the development of online support services is a long, complex and arduous process which demands a collaborative effort and involvement of all stakeholders throughout the entire process, it is one that is ultimately well worth the effort. It is the opinion of this writer that efforts to use technology productively in student services must be continued in order for the California Community Colleges to continue to succeed in their mission to:

> …offer academic and vocational education at the lower division level for both younger and older students, including those persons returning to school. Another primary mission is to advance California's economic growth and global competitiveness through education, training, and services that contribute to continuous work force improvement. (Chancellor's Office, 1998)

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Appendix A

RCC Online Counseling Web Page Evaluation Form (Phase I)

RCC ONLINE COUNSELING WEBPAGE EVALUATION FORM (Phase II)

We would like to assess the quality of the RCC Student Services website in general, and the Online Counseling website in particular. Please review the entire site and rate the quality of each section for each of the following attributes. Feel free to offer your suggestions for improvement.

A. STUDENT SERVICES WEBSITE (please circle your response)

Please rate the Student Services website on the following qualities:

	Poor	Somewhat Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Ease of navigation (Was the website easy to find and use?)	1	2	3	4	5

Suggestion: ______________________________

Accuracy of information (Was the information factually correct?)	1	2	3	4	5

Suggestion: ______________________________

Clarity of information (Was information easy to understand?)	1	2	3	4	5

Suggestion: ______________________________

Scope of information (Did the information meet user needs?)	1	2	3	4	5

Suggestion: ______________________________

Style of website (Rate the visual format of the website)	1	2	3	4	5

Suggestion: ______________________________

Did you encounter any of the following problems in the website?

Check "Here" if encountered	**Problems Encountered**	**Approximate location in website**
	Unnecessary Steps	
	Unclear / contradictory information	
	Information Redundancies	
	"Dead" links	
Other (specify)		

Continued on the next page....

The following questions refer to the Online Counseling / Advising Website only.

B. ONLINE COUNSELING / ADVISING WEBSITE (please circle your response)

Please rate the Online Counseling / Advising website on the following qualities:

	Poor	Somewhat Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Ease of navigation (Was the website easy to find and use?)	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion: ______________________					
Accuracy of information (Was the information factually correct?)	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion: ______________________					
Clarity of information (Was the information easy to understand?)	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion: ______________________					
Scope of information (Did the information meet user needs?)	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion: ______________________					
Style of website (Rate the visual format of the website)	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion: ______________________					

Did you encounter any of the following problems in the website?

Check "Here" if encountered	**Problems Encountered**	**Approximate Location in website**
	Unnecessary Steps	
	Unclear / contradictory information	
	Information Redundancies	
	"Dead" links	
Other (specify)		

Please circle the response that best captures your feeling toward Online Counseling / Advising:

Compared to In-Person Counseling, I think Online Counseling / Advising will be...

Much Worse   Worse   Equal in Quality   Better   Much Better

What other changes can be made to improve *either* the Student Services or the Online Counseling/Advising websites?

____

____

Appendix B

Printed Copy Of Electronic Student Survey (Phase III)

Printed copy of electronic student survey used during Phase III.
Actual electronic survey can be found at:
http://www.academic.rccd.cc.ca.us:8900/SCRIPT/The_Waiting_Room/scripts/student/serve_home

RCC ONLINE COUNSELING WEB USER

Now that you've been a part of our online counseling services, please take a few minutes to rate your experience using the online counseling site.

Tell us about you're your Online Counseling experience:

Circle One

Was the invitation to participate in online counseling easy to understand? Y N

Did RCC respond to your counseling request in a timely manner? Y N

Were the directions for making an appointment easy for you to understand? Y N

Was your appointment time convenient for you? Y N

Did the RCC staff confirm the appointment time within 24 hours? Y N

Would you recommend this method of seeing a counselor to a friend? Y N
Why or why not?

Please add any additional comments about the above questions.

How many minutes were you waiting for your appointment?
No waiting
Less than 5 minutes
5 to 10 minutes
More than 10 minutes

Overall, how would you rate the quality of this site?
Excellent
Very Good
Good
Somewhat Poor
Poor

Where were you when you kept your on-line appointment?
At home
At work
At school computer lab
Somewhere else

Please tell us something about yourself.

What is your age group?

less than 21
22 to 29
30 to 39
40 to 49
50 and older

How many hours each week do you work outside the home?

Less than 20
21 to 40
More than 40

What time of day you usually work outside the home (i.e., working shifts)

(Check all that apply)

Morning (6am-12 noon)
Afternoon (Noon - 6pm)
Evening (6pm - 10pm)
Late Night or overnight (10pm - 6am)

What is your total household yearly income?

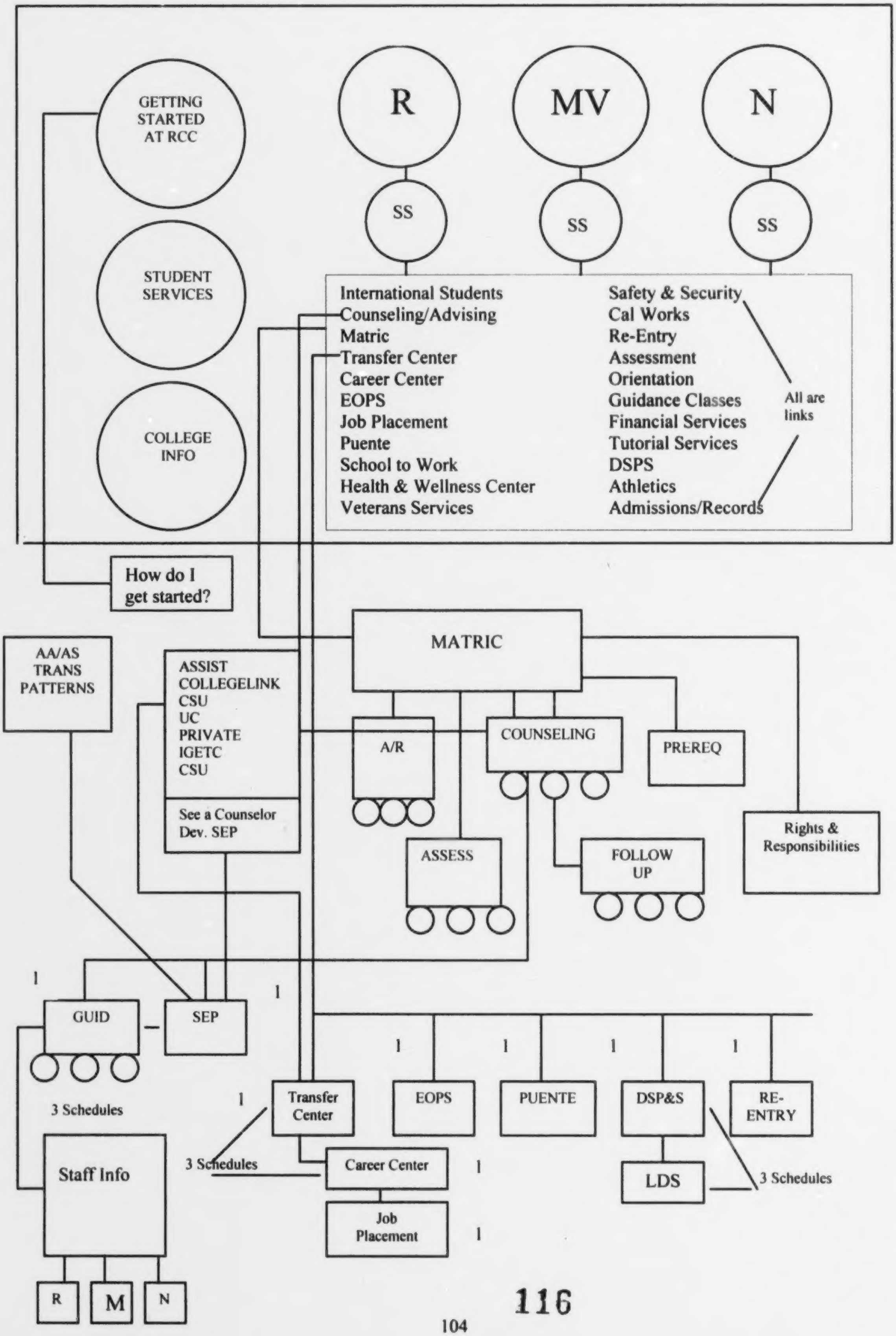
Under $20,000
$20,000 to $50,000
$50,001 to $75,000
$75,001 to $100,000
Over $100,000

How many people live in your household? (self-coded) ______

How can we improve the online counseling program?

Appendix C

Counseling Web Site Flow-Chart


GETTING STARTED AT RCC
STUDENT SERVICES
COLLEGE INFO
R
MV
N
SS
SS
SS
International Students
Counseling/Advising
Matric
Transfer Center
Career Center
EOPS
Job Placement
Puente
School to Work
Health & Wellness Center
Veterans Services
Safety & Security
Cal Works
Re-Entry
Assessment
Orientation
Guidance Classes
Financial Services
Tutorial Services
DSPS
Athletics
Admissions/Records
All are links
How do I get started?
AA/AS TRANS PATTERNS
ASSIST
COLLEGELINK
CSU
UC
PRIVATE
IGETC
CSU
See a Counselor
Dev. SEP
MATRIC
A/R
COUNSELING
PREREQ
ASSESS
FOLLOW UP
Rights & Responsibilities
1
GUID
SEP
1
3 Schedules
Staff Info
R
M
N
1
1
1
1
1
Transfer Center
EOPS
PUENTE
DSP&S
RE-ENTRY
3 Schedules
Career Center
1
LDS
3 Schedules
Job Placement
1

Appendix D

Reminder Memo To Counselors

MEMORANDUM

RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Norco • Moreno Valley • Riverside

TO: All Counselors

FROM: Dr. Jeanie Nishime

DATE: February 22, 1999

SUBJ: Counseling Web Site & Other Stuff

Thanks for all your hard work so far this semester. As things slow down a bit and you're able to attend to issues that have been put on the back burner, please take a moment to look at the online counseling web site. Your feedback is essential to the implementation of this project. The web address is: http://www.primenet.com/`dannell/rcc/pindex.html. Please complete the evaluation form and return it to Debbie DiThomas by Monday, March 1.

We will be issuing progress reports to instructors for students on Readmit Contracts, EOPS, DSPS, Puente and other groups. These should go out next week.

I am still waiting for academic status codes to be posted to the ATRT screen. Once this process is completed (hopefully this week) then we will begin sending out probation letters.

Appendix E

Initial Email To Students

Initial Email

Dear RCC Student,

This email is an invitation to you to become a participant in a pilot study, between April 26 and May 7, to evaluate and improve RCC's online counseling services in preparation for full implementation in the Fall of 1999.

We know that you are busy and cannot always access our counseling services at the times they are offered on campus. However, because we know that our services will help you progress towards your educational goals, the Riverside Community College counseling department is in the process of developing online student support services. We are now ready to conduct a pilot test of the counseling component of these online services and we need your help.

You were chosen to participate in this study because of your enrollment in an online political science course. Because the same online tools are used for counseling as those used in your political science course, it will be easy for you to meet with a counselor online. Although your participation is voluntary, we encourage you to get involved because this will be a great way for you to meet with a counselor, and because we need your input. If you do choose to participate, you will be able to:

a) make an online counseling appointment,
b) meet with a counselor online at the designated time, and
c) complete a brief online survey after the appointment.

Results of this survey will be used to make improvements to Riverside Community College's online counseling process prior to full implementation of this service. Your individual anonymity will be respected, but agregate results of the study will be available to you through the *Open Campus* counseling web site after September, 1999.

If you would like to meet with a Riverside Community College counselor online to discuss your career or educational plans or concerns, just go to:
http://www.academic.rccd.cc.ca.us/academic/counseling/cnsling/cnslingonline.htm
and submit a request for an online counseling appointment. Upon receipt of this electronic request, Riverside Community College will send you an email reply within one working day, offering you an available appointment.

If you have any questions or concerns about this counseling research project, please contact the project director, Debbie DiThomas, at debbied@rccd.cc.ca.us.

Thank you for your time. We look forward to meeting with you online.

Sincerely,
Riverside Community College Counseling Staff

Appendix F

Second Email To Students

Second Email

03/25/99 (current date)

Dear____________,

Thank you for your request for an Online Counseling appointment. We have tentatively scheduled your appointment for (mm/dd/yy). Please email us your acceptance of this appointment within twenty-four hours so that we can confirm it. *Please keep in mind that if you do not confirm your acceptance of this appointment within twenty-four hours, we will offer this time slot to another student.*

Upon your acceptance of this appointment, we will email you final confirmation and further instructions for keeping your appointment.

Thank you. We are looking forward to meeting with you online,
Riverside Community College Counseling Staff

Appendix G

Third Email To Students

Third Email

(current date)

Hello _________,

We have received your acceptance of the Online Counseling appointment that is scheduled for you on (mm/dd/yy). We are looking forward to meeting with you then. The following steps will get you to your online appointment:

1. Go to the Open Campus Online Counseling Homepage at: (http://www.academic.rccd.cc.ca.us/academic/counseling/).
2. Use your log-in codes:
   Username: ____________________
   Password: ____________________
3. Enter the *Counseling Rooms*.
4. Wait in the *Waiting Room* for your counselor to come and tell you he/she is ready to meet with you.

Since your counseling appointment is limited to thirty minutes, please log and enter the waiting room a few minutes early. To make the most of your appointment, make sure you are in a distraction free environment and that you come as prepared as possible. Prior to your appointment you may want to review available online information pertinent to your appointment. For example, **Associate Degree/Occupational Certificate** patterns or **general education transfer requirements** such as **IGETC** are available through our online catalog accessible at (http://www.rccd.cc.ca.us/). But please don't forget to be back in the waiting room five minutes before your appointment so that we can spend as much time with you as possible.

Again, thank you for your participation in this pilot project. We look forward to talking with you during your online appointment.

Riverside Community College Counseling Staff

Appendix H

Student Survey As It Appeared Online (Phase III)

Counseling Survey

Name: Debbie DiThomas

Number of Questions: 18

[redacted] [redacted]

RCC ONLINE COUNSELING WEB USER

Now that you've been a part of our online counseling services, please take a few minutes to rate your experience using the online counseling site.

Question 1 (0 points)

Was the invitation to participate in online counseling easy to understand?

○ 1. Yes

○ 2. No

[redacted]

Question 2 (0 points)

Did RCC respond to your counseling request in a timely manner?

○ 1. Yes

○ 2. No

[redacted]

Question 3 (0 points)

Were the directions for making an appointment easy to understand?

○ 1. Yes

○ 2. No

[redacted]

Question 4 (0 points)

Was your appointment time convenient for you?

○ 1. Yes

○ 2. No

[redacted]

Question 5 (0 points)

Did the RCC staff confirm the appointment time within 24 hours?

○ 1. Yes

○ 2. No

[redacted]

Question 6 (0 points)

Would you recommend this method of counseling to a friend?

○ 1. Yes

○ 2. No

[redacted]

Question 7 (0 points)

Please add any additional comments about the online counseling experience.

[redacted]

Question 8 (0 points)

How many minutes did you wait for your appointment?

○ 1. No wait
○ 2. Less than 5 minutes
○ 3. 5 to 10 minutes
○ 4. More than 10 minutes

[redacted]

Question 9 (0 points)

Overall, how would you rate the quality of this site?

○ 1. Very Good
○ 2. Good
○ 3. Adquate
○ 4. Somewhat Poor
○ 5. Poor

[redacted]

Question 10 (0 points)

Please make suggestions for improvement to the online counseling process.

[redacted]

Question 11 (0 points)

If you have participated in both online and in-person counseling at Riverside Community College, please answer the following question: Compared to In-person counseling, I think Online counseling is:

- ○ 1. Much worse
- ○ 2. Worse
- ○ 3. Equal in Quality
- ○ 4. Better
- ○ 5. Much Better

[redacted]

Question 12 (0 points)

Where were you when you participated in your online appointment?

- ○ 1. At home
- ○ 2. At work
- ○ 3. At school computer lab
- ○ 4. Elsewhere

[redacted]

Question 13 (0 points)

The following questions are optional & will be used only to collect baseline data about our online students. What is your age group?

- ○ 1. 21 and younger
- ○ 2. 22 to 29
- ○ 3. 30 to 39
- ○ 4. 40 to 49
- ○ 5. 50 and older

[redacted]

Question 14 (0 points)

How many college units have you completed?

○ 1. 20 or less units
○ 2. 21 to 40
○ 3. More than 40

[redacted]

Question 15 (0 points)

What is the highest college degree you have earned?

○ 1. I have not yet completed a college degree.
○ 2. Associate's Degree
○ 3. Bachelor's Degree
○ 4. Master's Degree
○ 5. Doctorate Degree

[redacted]

Question 16 (0 points)

How many hours per week do you usually work outside the home?

○ 1. 20 or less hours
○ 2. 21 to 40
○ 3. More than 40
○ 4. I do not work outside the home.

[redacted]

Question 17 (0 points)

What time of day do you usually work outside the home (Check all that apply)?

☐ 1. Morning (6 am - 12 noon)
☐ 2. Afternoon (noon - 6 pm)
☐ 3. Evening (6 pm - 10 pm)
☐ 4. Late night or overnight (10 pm - 6 am)

[redacted]

Question 18 (0 points)

What is your total household yearly income?

○ 1. $20,000 or less
○ 2. $20,001 to $50,000
○ 3. $50,001 to $75,000
○ 4. $75,001 to $100,000
○ 5. Over $100,000

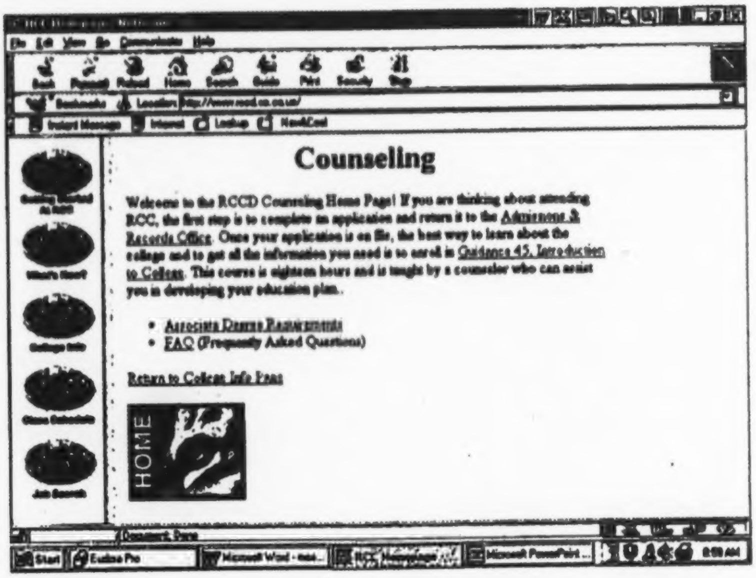
[redacted]

[redacted]

Appendix I

RCC's Two Counseling Web Pages Prior to This Study

Riverside Community College's Two Counseling Web Pages Prior to This Study

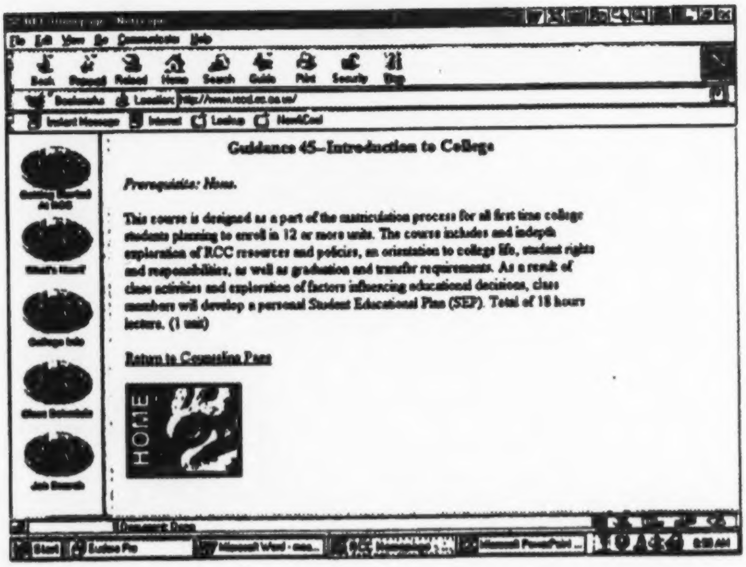

File Edit View Go Communicator Help
Back
Forward
Reload
Home
Search
Guide
Print
Security
Stop
Bookmarks
Location: http://www.rccd.cc.ca.us/
Instant Message
Internet
Lookup
New&Cool
Getting Started At RCC
What's New?
College Info
Class Schedule
Job Search
HOME
Document: Done
Start

Counseling

Welcome to the RCCD Counseling Home Page! If you are thinking about attending RCC, the first step is to complete an application and return it to the Admissions & Records Office. Once your application is on file, the best way to learn about the college and to get all the information you need is to enroll in Guidance 45, Introduction to College. This course is eighteen hours and is taught by a counselor who can assist you in developing your education plan..

- Associate Degree Requirements
- FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

Return to College Info Page


File Edit View Go Communicator Help
Back
Forward
Reload
Home
Search
Guide
Print
Security
Stop
Bookmarks
Location: http://www.rccd.cc.ca.us/
Instant Message
Internet
Lookup
New&Cool
Getting Started At RCC
What's New?
College Info
Class Schedule
Job Search
HOME
Document: Done
Start

Guidance 45–Introduction to College

Prerequisite: None.

This course is designed as a part of the matriculation process for all first time college students planning to enroll in 12 or more units. The course includes and indepth exploration of RCC resources and policies, an orientation to college life, student rights and responsibilities, as well as graduation and transfer requirements. As a result of class activities and exploration of factors influencing educational decisions, class members will develop a personal Student Educational Plan (SEP). Total of 18 hours lecture. (1 unit)

Return to Counseling Page

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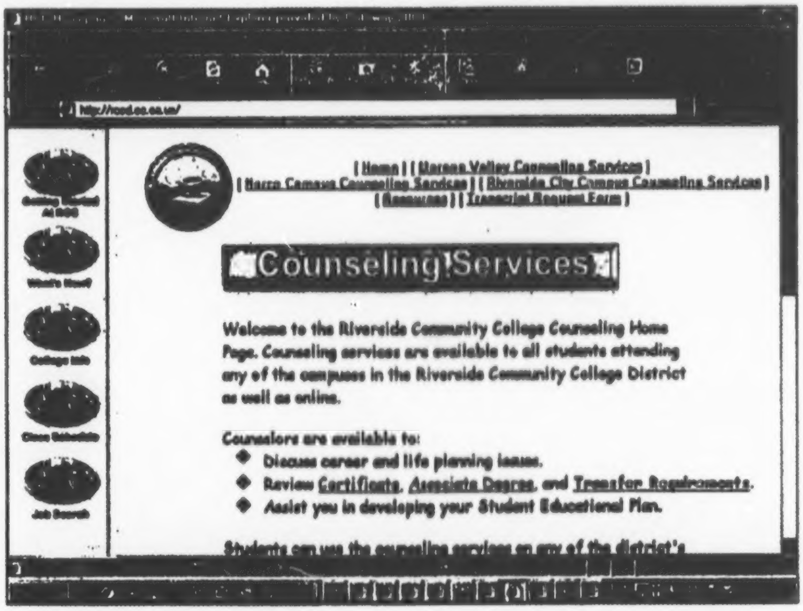
Appendix J

Examples of RCC's Counseling Web Pages At The Conclusion of This Study

Examples of Riverside Community College's Counseling Web Pages At The Conclusion Of This Study


http://rccd.cc.ca.us/
Getting Started At RCC
What's New?
College Info
Class Schedule
Job Search

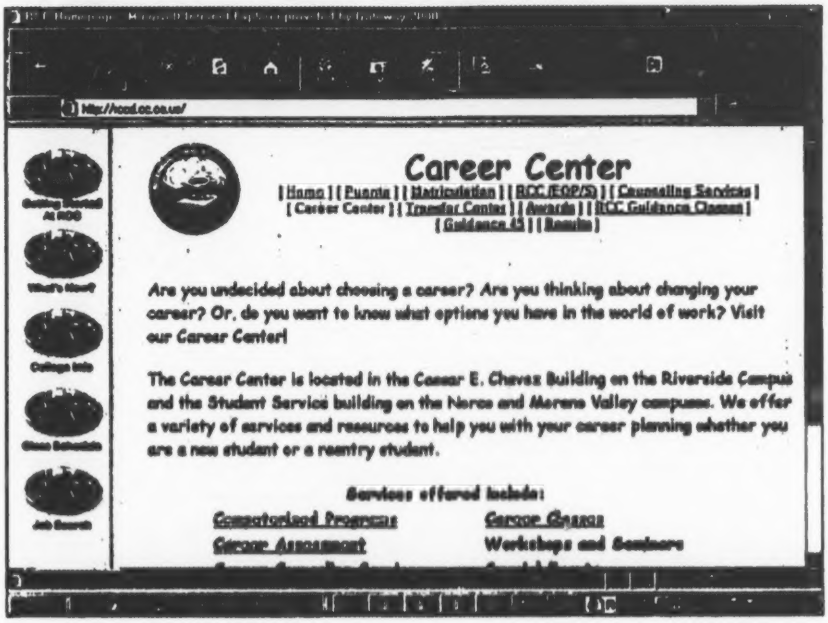
[Home] [Moreno Valley Counseling Services]
[Norco Campus Counseling Services] [Riverside City Campus Counseling Services]
[Resources] [Transcript Request Form]

Counseling Services

Welcome to the Riverside Community College Counseling Home Page. Counseling services are available to all students attending any of the campuses in the Riverside Community College District as well as online.

Counselors are available to:

- Discuss career and life planning issues.
- Review Certificate, Associate Degree, and Transfer Requirements.
- Assist you in developing your Student Educational Plan.


http://rccd.cc.ca.us/
Getting Started At RCC
What's New?
College Info
Class Schedule
Job Search

Career Center

[Home] [Puente] [Matriculation] [RCC/EOP/S] [Counseling Services]
[Career Center] [Transfer Center] [Awards] [RCC Guidance Classes]
[Guidance 45] [Resume]

Are you undecided about choosing a career? Are you thinking about changing your career? Or, do you want to know what options you have in the world of work? Visit our Career Center!

The Career Center is located in the Caesar E. Chavez Building on the Riverside Campus and the Student Service building on the Norco and Moreno Valley campuses. We offer a variety of services and resources to help you with your career planning whether you are a new student or a reentry student.

Services offered include:

Computerized Programs	Career Classes
Career Assessment	Workshops and Seminars

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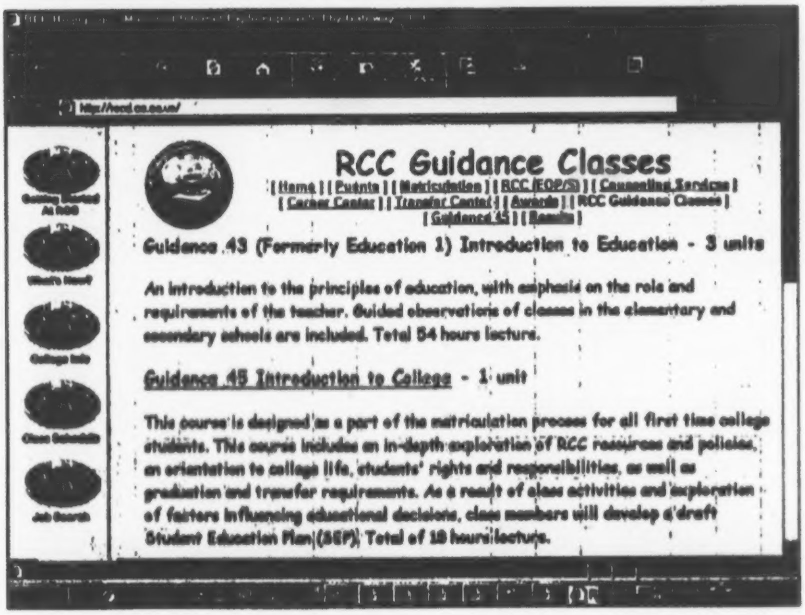

http://rccd.cc.ca.us/
Getting Started At RCC
What's New?
College Info
Class Schedule
Job Search

RCC Guidance Classes

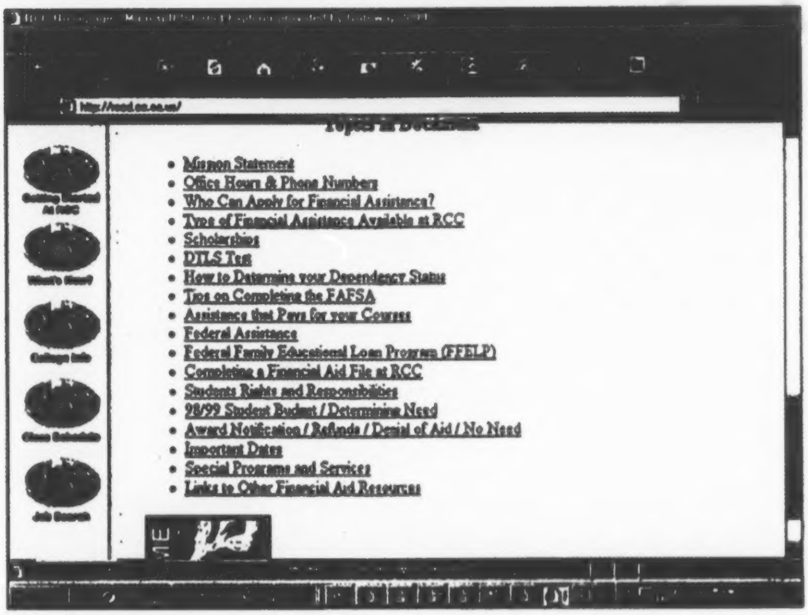
[Home] [Events] [Matriculation] [RCC (EOP/S)] [Counseling Services]
[Career Center] [Transfer Center] [Awards] [RCC Guidance Classes]
[Guidance 45] [Results]

Guidance 43 (Formerly Education 1) Introduction to Education - 3 units

An introduction to the principles of education, with emphasis on the role and requirements of the teacher. Guided observations of classes in the elementary and secondary schools are included. Total 54 hours lecture.

Guidance 45 Introduction to College - 1 unit

This course is designed as a part of the matriculation process for all first time college students. This course includes an in-depth exploration of RCC resources and policies, an orientation to college life, students' rights and responsibilities, as well as graduation and transfer requirements. As a result of class activities and exploration of factors influencing educational decisions, class members will develop a draft Student Education Plan (SEP). Total of 18 hours lecture.


http://rccd.cc.ca.us/
Getting Started At RCC
What's New?
College Info
Class Schedule
Job Search
ME

- Mission Statement
- Office Hours & Phone Numbers
- Who Can Apply for Financial Assistance?
- Type of Financial Assistance Available at RCC
- Scholarships
- DTLS Test
- How to Determine your Dependency Status
- Tips on Completing the FAFSA
- Assistance that Pays for your Courses
- Federal Assistance
- Federal Family Educational Loan Program (FFELP)
- Completing a Financial Aid File at RCC
- Students Rights and Responsibilities
- 98/99 Student Budget / Determining Need
- Award Notification / Refunds / Denial of Aid / No Need
- Important Dates
- Special Programs and Services
- Links to Other Financial Aid Resources

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Appendix K

Student Responses to Open-Ended Item 1 (Phase III)

Phase III: Student Responses to Open-Ended Item 1

- This was very convenient for me. Sometimes, it was a little awkward trying to communicate and understand each other. Had to explain things in more detail.

- It's very good that this service will be available. After taking an absolutely wonderful online Political Science course, I am eager to have more online communications with my school. I didn't really need this appointment because I am graduating this semester, but this would have been a very beneficial service for me a year ago.

- i was unable to just spit out questions and comments as they came to me. i also am still not sure if i am eligable to transfer, and that was my major question. i did have some questions answered thouhg. also it was very hard to log on. the computer kept telling me invalid address, i had to try over and over for 30 mins. before i got on.

- ______________ was on time and very informative. I appreciated his advice. *(This demonstrates one problem with online counseling—this student actually had her appointment with one counselor—but for some reason thought it was with another and wrote his name in her comments.)*

- online couseling has help me out alot..i have a disabilty where im not able to get to the campus for couseling, this was easier on me and very helpful for me..thank you for having online couseling and have me be involved it in the pilot program of it ;-)

- It was great to be able to get counseling without having to go to campus but I did prefer the meeting that was face to face. The convenience is strong selling point but meeting in person would still be my first choice.

- It would be helpful if the students were given their unofficial transcript to see where they stand.

- Once we got the bugs worked out...It was great! _______________ was a terrific help in guiding me in what I need to do to attain my goals. I would do this again in a second. Thanks for making me part of this experience!

- I would like to suggest opening up just a simple e-mail address that people can ask questions and just get an answer back within 24 hours. Then if the question is too detailed a counselling session (online/offline) could be suggested. This would allow students to gain assistance to simple questions without having to set up a specific time and taking up a 1/2 hour appointment with a coun.

- __________________ is a very good counselor. She answered all my questions. She also took the time to point out a few facts to me that I had not known that was not done to my transcripts. I would definitely refer her to other people.

- It was difficult for me to get into the website. But, with the patience and support of the staff I was successful at continuing with my appointment.

- This type of system will take some getting used to but it holds great possibilities. They key to making it work is for the couselers to have timely information and for the students to understand what they need. I'm not sure I knew what I needed, but it did help me identify some things I need to take care of. Thanks.

- Very nice for someone who does not have time to get to the campus.

- I felt that it was great, the only problem I had was trying to log on. It seemed that it took forever. I do reccomment this program very highly. RCC is keeping up with the constant change of technology. GREAT JOB

Appendix L

Student Responses to Open-Ended Item 2 (Phase III)

Phase III: Student Responses to Open-Ended Item 2

- It went well, can't think of any improvements at this time

- The link/address that was provided in my confirmation email was incorrect/non-working, so I had to figure out the address of the appointment. I am familiar/comfortable with the internet, so I was able to find it after a few tries, but it did take me a while. Some students may get lost. Other than that, I had no problems with this system. Also, it would have been a bit easier for me if I knew that my password was just my student number. I was trying to memorize it until I had to type it in....I would have found just as much success if I had of written it down! :)

- I am not sure if the counseling office was closed after I entered, but I feel uncomfortable if someone else could just come in and listen.

- I feel that what you are doing is great. My question is how will you handle all the on-line inquiries for counseling. This is a great way to discuss your future. I'm wondering if 30 minutes is too much. I received a great deal of information in just 15 minutes. If I were in person, 30 minutes would be just right as we tend to socalized as well as ask questions. When we are on-line, 15 minutes is a long time between waiting for responses, etc. Thank you for this experience. I thoroughly enjoyed it!

- no suggestions at this time

- I had trouble accessing the site and missed my first appt. I was frustrated because I was given an address that wasn't made very clear. I got the site about 15 mins after my appt was over. I wasted about 45 mins of my time.

- There could be more options set up so the student can ask more questions such as a section for transferring, or student educational plans. I would also like to see a printout of my transcript such as the face to face counselors show, so that I know exactly what the counselor is talking about as far as improving my grades.

- Just working at getting the information back to the person trying to make the appt quicker. I kept thinking that no one got my message so I probably e-mailed it two more times so Im sure that got confusing.

- Maybe a website where people who are new could go to and get information on how to work the system and what to expect from the session. That way they would not waste too much time with the coun asking technical questions.

- It needs more explanation of what the "waiting rooms" were. I did not understand that concept too well.

- More times offered.

- The only recommendation I have is to make it easier to get in to the site. The URL is a nightmare!

- Just that you need to make it clear what the student can and can't do online. Maybe some type of online resource that lists the types of situations where online counseling is appropriate and where it would be better to do a face to face meeting.

- Make sure all the links work. I had a difficult time getting to the site and could not fill out the survey after I finished with my appointment cause none of the links worked.